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ABSTRACT

The Qualitative Studies section of the Proceedings contains the following 16 papers: "Public Journalism and the Search for Democratic Ideals" (Theodore L. Glasser and Stephanie Craft); "Scratching the Surface: 'The New York Times' Coverage of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, 1977-1997" (Carolina Acosta-Alzuru); "Context and the Developed World: Newspaper Coverage of Crisis in Scotland and Belgium" (Christian Christensen); "Newsrooms under Siege: Crime Coverage, Public Policy and the Louisiana Pizza Kitchen Murders" (Christopher P. Campbell); "Decontextualization of Hirohito: Historical Memory Loss in Docudrama 'Hiroshima'" (Koji Fuse); "Al-Amiriya, February 13, 1991--Broadcasting Standards of Violence in a Time of War" (Geri Alumit); "A Show about Nothing?: Social Manners, 'Seinfeld' and the Dense Web of American Civility" (David P. Pierson); "Spokesperson as Agenda Builder: Framing the Susan Smith Investigation" (Lynn M. Zoch and Erin A. Galloway); "Rethinking the Unintended Consequences: The Pursuit of Individualism in American Primetime Television Advertising" (Joyce M. Wolburg and Ronald E. Taylor); "Analysis of Physician Assisted Suicide in the 'New York Times' from 1991-1996" (Robert K. Kalwinsky); "Organizational Rhetoric as Performance Art: A Dramatistic Study of Corporate Communication, Public Relations and Fund Raising" (Margaret Duffy); "Heroes, Villains and Twice-Told Tales: The Normative Power of Journalism's Worklore" (Frank E. Fee, Jr.); "American Myth, Literary Journalism and 'The Last Cowboy's Henry Blanton" (Susan Blue); "When the Numbers Don't Add Up: The Framing of Proposition 187 Coverage in the 'Los Angeles Times'" (Peter Hart); "Anti-Drinking and Driving PSAs: Do They Have Any Meaning to Underage College Students? Implications for PSA Designers" (Alyse R. Gotthoffer); and "A New Media Analysis Technique: An Ethical Analysis of Media Entertainment" (Eileen R. Ringnalda). Individual papers contain references. (RS)

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(80th, Chicago, Illinois, July 30-August 2, 1997):

QUALITATIVE STUDIES

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PUBLIC JOURNALISM AND THE SEARCH FOR DEMOCRATIC IDEALS

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PUBLIC JOURNALISM AND THE SEARCH FOR DEMOCRATIC IDEALS

One imperfect measure of the growing influence of "public journalism" in newsrooms throughout the United States is The New Yorker's reluctant recognition of it. Twice in one year the magazine played host to writers whose views amounted to unambiguous disdain for public journalism and what it portends for the future of American journalism. One essay, in late 1996, found the "do-gooding" philosophy of public journalism to be "a fraud" and a "bad idea"; its "high-minded" claims added up to a "dishonest" and ultimately "anti-democratic" role for the press (Kelly, 1996, p. 46). Earlier that year James Fallows, author of Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy (1996), was taken to task for expressing sympathy for a "movement in the media" that seemed to be "especially popular among ink-free journalism professors"; public journalism "may sound like a neat idea at N.Y.U.," referring to New York University, where Jay Rosen runs his Project on Public Life and the Press, but "[w]hen journalists begin acting like waiters and taking orders from the public and pollsters, the results are not pretty" (Remnick, 1996, p. 41-42).

With a tone calculated to condemn rather than critique the tenets of public journalism, these and other attacks seldom offer more than a crude caricature or a snide synopsis of what represents a genuinely innovative, if not altogether successful, effort to move journalists away from thinking about the claims of "separation" that have long defined the practice of American journalism and toward thinking about the claims of "connection" that might redefine and reinvigorate the role of the press in a democratic society. Indeed, Rosen (1994) uses precisely these terms to establish a dividing line between traditional and public journalism: "Traditional journalism worries about getting the separations right. Public journalism is about trying to get the connections right" (p. 9).

The separations of concern to Rosen, mostly dualisms and dichotomies endorsed in practice and, when necessary, cited as principles of professional conduct, cover considerable ground in and beyond the newsroom. Rosen cites ten claims of separation, each in its own way a contribution to a larger corpus of claims having to do with standards of performance appropriate for judging the role and responsibility of the press:

i. Editorial functions are separated from the business side.
ii. The news pages are separate from the opinion pages.
iii. Facts are to be separated from values.
iv. Those who "make the news" are separated from those who "cover the news."
v. Truth-telling must be separated from the consequences of truth-telling so that journalists can "tell it like it is."
vi. The newspaper is separated from other institutions by its duty to report on them.

vii. One day is separated from another because news is what's "new" today.

viii. A good journalist separates reality from rhetoric.

ix. One's professional identity must be separated from one's personal identity as a citizen.

x. How you "feel" about something is separate from how you report on it (Or: the journalist's mind is separate from the journalist's soul.)

Taken together, these claims capture in broad outline form the familiar notion of an independent press committed to providing citizens with the accurate and unbiased information they need to properly govern themselves. They convey the ideal of a "watchdog" press, a Fourth Estate, a private institution designed to keep.its readers, viewers and listeners posted on matters of public concern. They vivify the image journalists need to have of themselves if the news media, as Schudson (1995, p. 211) recently put it, are "to act as if they were instruments of popular education in a rich, vitalized democracy."

Public journalism rejects the assumption of a "rich, vitalized democracy" and thus rejects as well the role the press plays in it. It instead presumes a democracy in decay and posits a role for the press based, empirically and normatively, on what journalism can do to enrich a public discourse that has long been in decline. We, too, question the vitality of modern American democracy, but we have questions as well about what this arguably new role for the press might entail and what view of democracy it implies. We begin, then, with a review of what public journalism claims for itself, at least insofar as those claims can be discerned from the various proposals and projects commonly associated with the terms "public" or "civic" journalism. We next focus on areas where public journalism's conception of the press and the press's commitment to self-governance appear to be most problematic. We conclude with a brief assessment of the prospects for a public purpose for a private press.

The Principles of Public Journalism

If there is no consensus on what to call it, most American journalists--and increasingly journalists elsewhere--have no difficulty recognizing the term public or civic journalism. It denotes a simple but controversial premise: The purpose of the press is to promote and indeed improve, and not merely report on or complain about, the quality of public or civic life.

Whether it is being celebrated or criticized, there is little disagreement about what, basically, public journalism expects from the press. To recycle a description we have used elsewhere (Glasser and Craft, 1996), public journalism expects the press to recognize its role in fostering public participation and public debate. It expects the press to embrace a kind of "good news," to invoke the title of a new and relevant study of news and community (Christians, Ferre and Fackler, 1993), which is not to say it condones a witless boosterism which uncritically accepts--or mindlessly supports--the status quo. The good news of interest to public journalism conveys optimism about the future and confidence in "our" ability to get there. Public journalism thus strikes a hopeful tone; it stands as a corrective to a language of despair and discontent.

The Origins of Public Journalism

Described by its proponents as a "grassroots reform movement" (Charity, 1995, p. 1) intended to "recall journalism to its deepest mission of public service" (Rosen, 1995a, p. 16), public journalism emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s in response to what was taken to be a widening gap between citizens and government and a "general disgust with and withdrawal from public life" (Merritt, 1995, p. 6). It also emerged in response to journalism itself, namely the dismal performance of the press in its coverage of the 1988 U. S. presidential campaign.

Not only was the 1988 election depicted as a race, a contest, but to an unprecedented degree journalists insisted on giving readers, viewers and listeners an "insider's view" of politics, what Gitlin (1990, p. 19) described as a fascinating but mostly irrelevant tour "backstage, behind the horse race, into the paddock, the stables, the clubhouse, and the bookie joints." Didion (1988) made much the same point with her reference to "insider baseball," a game described mostly for the benefit of the players. What was being covered as the 1988 campaign, she observed, was not "the democratic process" to which citizens had access but a process so specialized and limited that only its own professionals--politicians, policy experts, journalists, pollsters, pundits--could be reasonably described as its participants (cf. Rosen, 1991; Carey, 1995). News of the campaign, in short, focused overwhelmingly on strategy rather than substance, a schema, as Jamieson (1993, p. 38) puts it, which invited voters to ask not "Who is better able to serve as president?" but "Who is going to win?":

> In the strategy schema, candidates are seen as performers, reporters as theatrical critics, the audience as spectators. The goal of the performer is to "win" the votes of the electorate, projected throughout the performance in polls. The polls determine whether the candidate will be cast as a front-runner or underdog, whether the candidate will be described as achieving goals or "trying" to achieve them, and how the candidate's staged and unstaged activities will be interpreted. In the strategy schema, candidates do not address problems with solutions, but "issues" with "strategies." The language of the strategy schema is that of sports and war. The vocabulary lets reporters, candidates, and the public ask "Who is winning, and how?" The posture invited of the electorate by this schema is cynical and detached.

No blue-ribbon panel formed to assess the 1988 election campaign and the news media's coverage of it; nothing like the

Hutchins Commission of the mid-1940s[1], that is, put forth a call for reform in a language sure to alienate the very journalists expected to lead the reformation. Rather, public journalism spread from working papers and workshops to proposals and projects; there was no grand plan, no manifesto, which probably contributed in untold ways to the favorable reception it received in dozens of newsrooms in the early 1990s. If Rosen took the lead in facilitating discussions about public journalism, he always made it a point to keep the discussions open-ended, which usually meant framing them as opportunities to contribute to a work in progress. When, for example, he spoke to a gathering of journalists and academics at the American Press Institute in Reston, Virginia, in 1994, Rosen began by disclaiming any canonical conception of public journalism: "The most important thing that anyone can say about public journalism I will say right now: we're still inventing it. And because we're still inventing it, we don't really know what 'it' is. We've come to Reston to find out."[2]

The genesis of public journalism coincided with, though only occasionally cited, a new and growing body of literature on the problems of modern democracy (e.g. Habermas, 1989; Calhoun, 1992; Putnam, 1993;), much of it focused on the collapse of a vibrant and accessible "public sphere," to use the term Habermas popularized in 1989 with the publication in English of a post-doctoral dissertation he had written in German in 1962. This literature included a series of works focused on the American democratic experience (e.g. Barber, 1984; Fraser, 1992; Putnam, 1995; Sandel, 1996), many of them trying to explain, as one of the more provocative titles puts it, Why Americans Hate Politics (Dionne, 1991); it included as well several critiques dealing specifically, if not always exclusively, with communication and journalism (e.g., Entman, 1989; Carey, 1987, 1995; Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991; Keane, 1991; Peters and Cmiel, 1991; Christians, Ferre and Fackler, 1993; Fallows, 1996). While these and other works neither explain nor account for the phenomenon of public journalism, they arguably added to the urgency of public journalism's call for reform and affirmed the legitimacy of public journalism's contention that little had been gained over the years by what Schudson (1995, p. 211) fairly terms the "platitudinous thinking . about democracy that is the coin of the realm in and around journalism."

A Journalism of Conversation

Public journalism calls for a shift from a "journalism of information" to a "journalism of conversation," to use Carey's (1987) useful distinction. The public needs to be informed, of course, but it also needs to be engaged in the day's news in ways that invite discussion and debate. And engaging the public--rather than merely informing it--requires a different approach to journalism and different routines for journalists.

The approach is different in two important ways. First, public journalism expects the press to participate in, and not remain detached from, efforts to improve the quality of public discourse. Second, public journalism calls on the press to broaden its conception of politics by understanding democracy as a way of life and not merely as a form of government.

Public journalism rejects, emphatically and categorically, any interpretation of "objectivity" or "objective reporting" that holds that newsrooms must stand detached from, and disinterested in, the affairs of the community. If public journalism stops short of equating "doing journalism" with "doing politics," it nonetheless "places the journalist within the political community as a responsible member with a full stake in public life"; public journalism, Rosen (1994, p. 11) explains,

> ...does not deny the important differences between journalists and other actors, including political leaders, interest groups, and citizens themselves. What is denied is any essential difference between the standards and practices that make responsible journalism and the habits and expectations that make for a swell-functioning public realm, a productive dialogue, a politics we can all respect. In a word, public journalists want public life to work. In order to make it work they are willing to declare an end to their neutrality on certain questions--for example: whether people participate, whether a genuine debate takes place when needed, whether a community comes to grips with its problems, whether politics earns the attention it

claims.

What public journalism also denies, however, is that its rejection of objectivity amounts to an endorsement of the kind of partisan advocacy the press abandoned long ago. Public journalism's "golden rule," as Charity (1995, pp. 144-146) describes it, positions the press as a champion of democratic means but not democratic ends: "*Journalism should advocate democracy without advocating particular solutions.*" Merritt (1995, p. 116) reaches essentially the same conclusion when he argues that public journalism needs to retain "neutrality on specifics" while at the same time "moving far enough beyond detachment to care about whether resolution occurs." What this usually adds up to is a commitment from the press to provide or otherwise facilitate more and better opportunities for public debate and discussion, presumably regardless of what is being debated and discussed.

Public journalism's concern for the quality of public discourse widens and to some extent clarifies journalism's view of politics by recognizing citizens as a source of political wisdom. This optimistic view of the electorate invites the press to expand the scope of political coverage beyond politicians and the issues they regard as salient. More than that, it encourages journalists to appreciate the press as an agency not only *of* but also *for* communication, a medium through which citizens can inform themselves *and* through which they can discover their common values and shared interests. Public journalism therefore invites the community at large, reporters and readers alike, to consider, as Dewey (1927), Carey (1987, 1995) and countless others have urged, that "what we mean by democracy depends on the forms of communication by which we conduct politics" (Carey, 1995, p. 379).

New forms of communication not only relocate politics but relocate the journalist as well, as Rosen (1995b) illustrates with reference to a journalist at New York Newsday, Jim Dwyer, who wrote a column, "In the Subways," based on his experiences riding the subways and enduring--and at times enjoying--what tens of thousands of New Yorkers endure and occasionally enjoy each day. Unlike reporters for, say, the New York Times, whose approach to stories about the subways usually begins and ends with interviews with officials at the Transit Authority, which has jurisdiction over the subway system, Dwyer's stories ordinarily begin with his experiences riding the subways. The significance of the difference, Rosen points out, is that Dwyer's "immediate, flesh and blood connection to citizens" established his authority as a representative of--or surrogate for--his readers and their interests; Dwyer may end up interviewing officials at the Transit Authority, but by then "with some earned authority of his own," which, Rosen believes, addresses what public journalism needs to address when it encourages new routines for reporters: "Power without authority is the quickest way to arouse public resentment" (Rosen, 1995b, pp. 5-6).

Good Journalism, Good Business

One of public journalism's most controversial claims rests on the supposition that good journalism, which is to say public journalism, will attract more and better readers and thereby enhance a newspaper's standing in the marketplace. In 1989, in an appeal to editors published in The Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Rosen more or less introduced the idea of public journalism by calling for an appreciation for the connection between a newspaper's vitality and the vitality of public life. It was an appeal aimed at beleaguered editors who worried about declining readership and who worried even more about the market-driven solutions being proposed by publishers and vice presidents whose training in business, not journalism, was taken to mean that management could not always be counted on to safeguard traditional newsroom values.[3]

Cautiously but apparently convincingly, Rosen (1991) advanced the proposition that "a healthy public sphere is, in some respects, in the circulation interests of newspapers" (p. 273). The chief executive officer of the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain, James Batten, an early and eager supporter of public journalism, agreed; in a lecture in 1990 Batten cited a Knight-Ridder study of 16,300 readers which found empirical support for Rosen's claim about the importance and relevance of improving the quality of a community's shared civic culture: "people who say they feel a real sense of connection to the places they live" are almost twice as likely to be regular readers of newspapers. Efforts to "enhance these feelings of connectedness," Batten concluded, may "produce at least part of the readership and circulation growth American newspapers are pushing for" (quoted in Rosen, 1991, p. 273).

Batten and others thus understand public journalism as an "added value," to use the phrase Rosen (1994a) applies to public journalism's principal product--"connectivity." Any product or service, Charity (1995, p. 155, 158) explains, relies on its added value to position itself in the marketplace: "Over the long run, people will pay for a good or service only if it gives them something they wouldn't otherwise have gotten cheaper or better elsewhere." Most forms of journalism, according to Charity, offer little in the way of added value; the news media are barely distinguishable from other media. Public journalism, however, adds value to newspapers by helping readers engage each other in an ongoing conversation; public journalism, therefore, "makes economic sense" (Charity, 1995, p. 155).

Merritt (1994), too, wants to find a way to reconcile public journalism with the realities of free enterprise. But unlike Rosen and Charity, who view public journalism as a financially viable alternative to conventional journalism, Merritt prefers to frame public journalism as an adjunct to whatever role the press needs to play to survive in the marketplace:

> The two roles--reviving public life while dealing with the realities of the popular marketplace--coexist in public journalism because they need not be mutually

> exclusive. Beyond the journalist's core responsibility to support public life, everything else that might go into a newspaper is optional and subject to no meaningful test beyond the informational and entertainment desires of readers. Provided that the core concerns are zealously guarded, what harm can come from knowing, and picking from, the reader's wish list for the balance of the newspaper, no matter how serendipitous or inconsequential it may seem? (pp. 25-26).

A commitment to public journalism, Merritt argues, does not necessarily require a commitment of resources: "A change in culture, in attitude, in purpose carries no direct cost" (quoted in Rosen, 1994b, p. 377).

The Problems of Public Journalism

Public journalism's enthusiasm for democracy and democratic participation masks important differences between different forms of democracy and by implication different roles for the press. It is never quite clear whether the press is being called on to support "a republican common dialogue," to use Baker's (1994, p. 6) language, "or, alternatively, a diversity of groups each with its own concerns and dialogue." Fraser (1992, p. 122) raises similar questions, though, like Baker, not with reference to public journalism, when she reminds us that "welfare state mass democracies" of the kind that exist today in the United States and elsewhere operate within "stratified societies" where the "basic institutional framework generates unequal social groups in structural relations of dominance and subordination." Under these conditions, Fraser argues, it makes little sense to assume the existence of "a single, over-arching public sphere."

As public journalism begins to shift its focus from "special projects to sustainable routines" (Rosen, 1995b, p. 2), problems persist not only with regard to the meaning of democratic participation but also with regard to what constitutes press reform. New routines, as important as they may be, may not be enough if, as Eliasoph (1988, p. 315) found in her recent study of a radio newsroom, "economic and organizational factors help determine news content more than the routines."

Public Journalism and the Quest for Public Opinion

If public journalism prefers to define itself as a "journalism of conversation," to return to Carey's (1987) framework, its view of public opinion--and certainly its use of public opinion polls--fits comfortably within the tradition of a "journalism of information." Notwithstanding the claim, implied throughout the literature on public journalism, that the quality of public opinion will improve as the quality of the conditions for public discourse improve, assessments of the value or worth of public opinion almost always give way to measurements of its amount.

Measuring public opinion through polls of one kind or another, one of several journalistic conventions from which public journalism seems unable to free itself, tends to reify public opinion in ways contrary to public journalism's familiar premise that debate and discussion need to be distinctively public and that the press has a special responsibility to secure their "publicness."[4] The use of polls generally weakens the opportunities for truly public discourse in three related ways: (1) they deny the publicness of public opinion by confusing the opinions of individuals with the opinions of publics; (2) they fail to distinguish between informed and rational opinion and mere expressions of preference and prejudice; (3) they obscure the news media's responsibility for setting an agenda for public debate and discussion.

First, by operationally defining public opinion as a compilation of individual opinion, pollsters and their polls in effect disclaim any requirement for individuals to stake a public claim for their opinions and the reasons for them. By focusing on the individual and on individual opinion, polls accentuate the "privateness" of opinion and neglect the importance of collective processes of deliberation aimed at reaching a publicly accepted consensus: Individuals are effectively isolated from the very feature that makes public opinion distinctively public (Salmon and Glasser, 1995, pp. 449-450). Moreover, polls themselves, whatever they may be measuring, can foster a sense of alienation and dislocation by "forcing" responses to and in a language that may be unfamiliar, inappropriate or even offensive to individual respondents. As Herbst (1993, p. 450) found in her study of a politically diverse group of Chicago citizens, activists and non-activists alike, polls not only fail to capture public opinion but may well serve to inhibit it: "Polls are believed to suppress critical thinking, and to dictate the questions a society asks itself as well as the possible range of answers. The people I spoke with seemed to understand just how polling restricts debate on their _own_ issues of concern."

Second, polls produce opinions even in the absence of any sound basis for them. To be sure, polls _seduce_ opinion, which is what Pollock (1976, p. 229) means when he observes that much of what passes for "public opinion" are crude and unsupported stereotypes for which the individual respondent, questioned anonymously, is seldom held accountable: "The contradiction between the compulsion to have an opinion and the incapacity to form an opinion leads many people to accept stereotypes which relieve them of the thankless task of forming their own opinions and yet enable them to enjoy the prestige of being in touch with things."

Third, as we have argued elsewhere (Glasser and Craft, 1996, pp. 130-132), the use of polls contributes to public journalism's view of public opinion as a source, rather than as a consequence, of newsroom agendas. While Rosen expects the press to play a leadership role in the community, others are at best ambivalent about the press's agenda-setting role. Merritt (1995, p. 80), for example, categorically denies it: Public journalism "isn't about newspapers setting a public agenda." Charity (1995, p. 24), in turn, refers to the _public's_ agenda and how the press might "hear" it. No one seems eager to press the issue: Does public opinion exist prior to--and thus independent of--the press, presumably waiting to be discovered by politicians, journalists and their respective pollsters? Or, to take the counterpoised view (and to resort to an unfair dichotomy), does the press bring publics and their opinions into existence by stimulating discussion on issues of common concern? When Rosen (1994c, p. 15) calls on newspapers to have a "vision of the community as a better place to live," is he merely asking for an answer to an empirical question--or asking, rather, for the press to own up to a role it always plays but seldom acknowledges?

The Press and Public Discourse: Dialogue or Deliberation?

Because public journalism emerged without a clearly articulated political philosophy, considerable confusion persists about what, precisely, democracy means and what counts as democratic participation. If democracy comes in many forms (Held, 1987), public journalism seems unsure about which version it wants to embrace and which democratic norms it therefore wants to endorse. Nowhere is this uncertainty and confusion more apparent than in public journalism's grand but vague commitment to improving the quality of public discourse.

Public discourse means a little of everything in the literature on public journalism. It means creating the conditions for dialogue and discussion among citizens; it thus calls on the press--along with others in the community--to bring citizens together in the form of reading groups, roundtable discussions, salons, and so on. It also means "re-representing" these discussions for the benefit of citizens unable to participate in them; it thus expects the press to report on public gatherings with the same commitment and enthusiasm it brings to its coverage of, say, city council meetings or sessions of the state legislature. It means, finally, using the press itself as a forum for debate; it thus requires journalists to establish criteria for selecting sources and to find ways to engage them in a serious and civil discussion on the day's issues. In his chapter on public journalism's responsibility for "public judgment," Charity (1995, pp. 101-124) illustrates--and happily promotes--all of these approaches to public discourse.

By defining public discourse broadly and indiscriminately, public journalism evades one of its most important choices: deciding how democracy will work. If it is clear what forms of democracy public journalism rejects--an "administrative" democracy of the kind Walter Lippmann (1965) favored, for example[5]--it is less clear what form(s) it accepts. Indeed, the ideals of dialogue and deliberation point to very different models of democracy and envisage very different roles for the press. Dialogue implies standards of discourse associated with *speech*; it presumes an oral tradition grounded in interpersonal relations. Deliberation, in contrast, denotes a process, which may or may not be dialogic, through which reasoned judgments might be formed. Opportunities for dialogue may be all that is needed to create the conditions for deliberation, but it does not follow, as Thompson (1995) persuasively argues, that opportunities for deliberation require the conditions for dialogue; it is not the case, therefore, that a deliberative democracy begins where a direct, participatory democracy begins, namely with an open and unfettered dialogue:

> ...it is important to stress that a deliberative conception of democracy is not necessarily a dialogic conception. The formation of reasoned judgements does not require individuals to participate in dialogue with others. There are no good grounds for assuming that the process of reading a book or watching a television programme is, by itself, less conducive to deliberation than engaging in face-to-face conversation with others. On the contrary, by providing individuals with forms of knowledge and information to which they would not otherwise have access, mediated quasi-interaction can stimulate deliberation just as much as, if not more than, face-to-face interaction in a shared locale. This is not to say that all forms of mediated communication will, in practice, stimulate deliberation--doubtless that would be untrue. But it is to say that we should free ourselves from the idea that the process of deliberation, and the formation of reasoned judgement, bears a privileged relation to the dialogical form of symbolic exchange (Thompson, 1995, p. 256).

Except perhaps in the smallest of communities, and excluding the unproven potential for truly democratic participation in cyberspace, "direct" democracy has been difficult to achieve and even more difficult to sustain over time. The problem is largely, though not entirely, one of scale: Where do we find, or how do we create, democratic associations small enough to accommodate full participation among its members? How can the press and other agencies of communication facilitate the proliferation of these smaller civil associations and at the same time promote a larger network of regional, state, national, and even international assemblies that work across spatially delimited locales (Held, 1995, p. 237; cf. Barber, 1984, pp. 245-251)? Accordingly, the challenge for the press in a direct, participatory democracy rests not only on journalism's commitment to local associations and local dialogue but its commitment as well to preserving the identity and integrity of these local associations as their discussions feed into successively larger discussions.

A deliberative democracy poses a different set of challenges for the press. While deliberation does not formally require journalists to accommodate an unrestricted dialogue among citizens, it does require that the day's news be written in a way that invites each citizen's considered judgment. At a minimum this means framing topics as issues rather than as events and then soliciting debate and commentary without regard for the speaker's power or privilege in society (Gouldner, 1976, pp. 98-99). What is important in a deliberative democracy is not that everyone gets to speak, to paraphrase Alexander Meiklejohn (1965), but that everything worth saying gets said; what needs protection, it follows, is not individual expression but the content of expression (see Norris, 1976; Glasser, 1991).

The Political Economy of Public Journalism

Public journalism remains conspicuously quiet on questions of press ownership and control. It also steers clear of related issues concerning the apparent contradiction between the interests of advertisers whose products and services appeal to a certain mix of readers and the interests of a press committed to a empowering a broad spectrum of readers. These larger concerns may have seemed irrelevant at a time when public journalism presented itself as an occasional project, but they are likely to become important points of contention if, as Rosen hopes, public journalism becomes a bonafide movement "in the classic tradition of public-spirited reform" (Rosen, 1995a, p. 16).

Rosen's confidence in public journalism as a bridge between a newsroom's commitment to public service and a publisher's commitment to profit, a belief now shared by several publishers and at least two newspaper chains, creates a considerable gap between public journalism and the conventional wisdom of press critics who have long complained about the constant and often debilitating tension between the newsroom and the boardroom--the peculiar agony, as one commentator puts it, of a "godless corporation run for profit" and a "community institution operated for the public good" (Bagdikian, 1972, p. 8). While Rosen (1994c, p. 16) acknowledges, for example, the difference between "consumers" of interest to advertisers and "citizens" of interest to public journalism, he and other proponents of public journalism fail to respond to the dilemma public journalism faces when these interests come in conflict and threaten the presumed harmony between what the newsroom wants and what the marketplace demands.

Because most newspapers sell individual copies at a price well below cost and make up the difference--and sustain profits--through revenues generated by advertising, advertisers are ordinarily cast in the role of consumer of consequence. Put a little differently, the principal purchase in journalism, especially journalism on "free" television or radio, is made by advertisers, not readers or viewers or listeners; and what is being purchased is what advertisers want most: a demographically attractive audience. The implications for content is clear: By providing a substantial press subsidy, to use Baker's term (1994, p. 69), advertisers create a strong incentive for the newsroom to shape content to appeal to the "right" audience (Baker, 1994, p. 66; see also Owen, 1975; Bagdikian, 1994).

Even if a robust public life brings more readers to the newspaper, it is unlikely that advertisers will want to subsidize content for these readers unless they are sufficiently affluent and in other ways appropriate for the goods and services being advertised. What advertisers will not subsidize, obviously, is content aimed at readers unable or unwilling to consume what advertisers want consumed. Indirectly, then, advertisers subsidize a particular class of reader, which has implications for a newspaper's circulation as well as its content. In one of the few studies aimed at understanding the relationship between advertising, circulation, and content, Blankenburg (1982) documents subtle efforts to skew circulation in favor of readers of interest to advertisers; this, in turn, justifies the newspaper's focus on--and exclusion of--certain types of content: "circulation policy," Blankenburg explains, "is a form of editorial policy, and withheld circulation is akin to suppressed information" (p. 398). Blankenburg's conclusion anticipates what may become one of public journalism's chief concerns: "The trouble with expelled subscribers, whether they meet marketing standards or not, is that they are citizens" (p. 398).

One way public journalism has been able to alleviate pressure from advertisers is to look elsewhere for a subsidy. Several foundations now support, directly or indirectly, public journalism and its projects. But philanthropic support, as welcome as it may be, calls into question both Rosen's and Merritt's claims, cited earlier, about the economics of public journalism. What can be said of a newspaper's commitment to public journalism when, to take but one illustration, the St. Paul Pioneer Press solicits and receives a $61,000 grant from the Pew Charitable Trust while its parent company, Knight-Ridder, posts a net income in 1995 in excess of $160 million?

A Public Purpose for a Private Press?

Public journalism lacks, by default or perhaps by design, a coherent public philosophy. Despite scores of articles and several books devoted to what it means in principle and in practice, the literature on public journalism offers little in the way of a sustained and systematic account of the role of the press in a democratic society. Virtually no literature exists, moreover, comparing public journalism with other plans to craft a public purpose for the press--models of public service media (cf. Keane, 1991), for example, or the tradition of "development" journalism (cf. Shah, 1996). Without a clear and compelling framework, separate and distinguishable from other frameworks, public journalism remains conceptually and intellectually dislocated.

Of course, public journalism's dislocation--its disarray as a normative theory of the press--probably accounts for some of its appeal among reporters and much of its acceptance among newsroom managers. Rosen acted strategically and perhaps prudently in the early days of public journalism when he self-consciously abandoned his "theoretical framework":

> I used to be a media critic, and here's how I worked: I would observe what the press does, filter it through my theoretical framework--essentially, my dissertation--and then write about the results. You can discover a lit that way, but there's a problem. Journalists haven't read your dissertation; they don't

> have your framework. So whatever you discover is of little interest to them. After all, they have deadlines to meet.
>
> ...I now employ a different method: I operate almost completely through the medium of conversation. My theoretical framework becomes whatever is needed in order to keep the conversation progressing. Public journalism is something journalists themselves must carry forward. What I think it should be doesn't matter as much as the version of it that I can share with reporters, editors, and news executives around the country (1995a, p. 23).

Now, however, Rosen worries about what will become of public journalism as it reaches "a critical point in its evolution":

> It has emerged from the birthing room with enough life to draw the attention of the profession--to get written up in trade journals, to get on the program at conferences, to get funded, to get named. But the period of attention-getting is over. We're on the radar screen and from now on when people turn their attention to public journalism they won't be asking: what's this? They'll be saying: what's there? (1995b, p. 1)

The issue is not, obviously, whether public journalism can or will achieve a degree of academic respectability. The issue, rather, is whether public journalism will live up to its promise of reform by offering, clearly and convincingly, a truly fundamental "redefinition of journalism" (Merritt, 1995, p. 5).

Public journalism faces any number of obstacles and challenges, but one key test of its resolve will be its relationship to market liberalism. Philanthropic support for public journalism only begs the question, for sooner or later foundations will move on to other projects. Will public journalism stake its future on the benevolence of a handful of publishers? Or, to cast the choice in its starkest terms, can public journalism muster the imagination to invite what Held (1995, pp. 251-252) calls "democratic political intervention," which is to say intervention aimed at ensuring "the conditions for the pursuit of individual or collective projects with minimum risk of intrusion by coercive powers, whether these be economic, political or social"?

Intervention of the kind Held describes underscores the importance of the distinction--and the difficulty of the choice--between systems of private exchange, focused appropriately on personal preference and individual freedom of choice, and public institutions designed to meet shared needs and common interests. Even in market-driven societies like the United States, there is still considerable support for protecting libraries, museums, schools and the like from the vagaries of private exchange and the indeterminacy of market economies. What protection, if any, does public journalism need and deserve? Indeed, where along the private-public continuum does public journalism fall? Is it essentially a *private* enterprise fashioned ultimately by good will and a corporate conscience? Or does it live up to its name as a distinctly public endeavor the survival of which depends not on consumer choice but on the community's considered judgment?

Notes

1. For a summary of the Commission's principal findings, mostly vilified and then ignored by the press, see Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947). For a worthwhile assessment of the Hutchins Commission and its work, see McIntyre (1987).

2. For a semi-autobiographical account the development of public journalism and the Reston meeting, see Rosen (1994b).

3. For a useful study of the escalating tension between the newsroom and the boardroom, see Underwood (1993).

4. For an interesting exception, see Fishkin's (1991) "deliberative" poll.

5. Held (1987, pp. 143-185) describes this form of democracy as "competitive elitist," a phrase intended to underscore the absence of widespread participation by ordinary citizens. For a useful critique of Lippmann's (1965) view of politics and democracy, see Carey (1995).

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SCRATCHING THE SURFACE:
THE NEW YORK TIMES COVERAGE OF
THE MOTHERS OF PLAZA DE MAYO, 1977-1997

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Scratching the Surface: *The New York Times* Coverage of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, 1977-1997

ABSTRACT

Scholars have looked at the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo from a historical, political, feminist and rhetorical perspective. But how have the media presented the Mothers? Through textual analysis, this paper examines The New York Times coverage of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo from 1977 until today exploring how the Mothers have been constructed in this major U.S. newspaper. This construction is consistent with previous research in the area of news coverage of women. It is superficial and tends to simplify and trivialize the Mothers and the issues involved, presenting them as either victims or demons while demeaning their importance as interlocutors of reality.

> The *desaparecidos* can never be allowed to be forgotten. What happened to our children must never be allowed to happen to another generation of young people (Elisa de Landin as quoted in Fisher, 1989, p. 157).

INTRODUCTION

On April 30, 1977 fourteen women between the ages of forty and sixty walked in a circle around the independence monument in the Plaza de Mayo of Buenos Aires in defiance of one of the most repressive regimes of this century. Although they came from different class and educational backgrounds, they shared a horrible reality: their children had "disappeared" as casualties of the "Dirty War" that the Argentine military Junta was waging against anyone suspected of being a subversive. By December of that same year, there were 300 women marching and by 1983, the last year of the military regime, thousands of Argentineans marched with these women in Plaza de Mayo (Bouvard, 1994; Simpson & Bennet, 1985). By then they were widely known in Argentina and in the rest of the world as *las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.

Today, twenty years after that very first act of defiance and desperation, they still march every Thursday at 3:30 pm. Most of their children like most of the 30,000 *desaparecidos*[1] are still unaccounted for while most of their torturers and murderers are free and have never paid for their crimes. In these twenty years Argentina has changed and the Mothers have developed into one of Latin America's most important women's movements, but the Mothers' essential plea has not changed: "we continue to wait for justice—we continue to fight for life and for freedom" (Agosin, 1990, p. 65).

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[1] Bouvard (1994) explains that 30,000 is a symbolic figure that may represent a much larger number of cases due to the fact that many relatives of the disappeared were too scared to come forward and that in the many instances where entire families disappeared, there are no surviving relatives to come forward either.

In Latin America the expression women's movement—*movimiento de mujeres*— is preferred to the term feminism. The latter is considered a loaded word which is usually (and erroneously) associated only with women who oppose motherhood, marriage and traditional women's role deeply entrenched in Latin American society. The development and life cycle of these women's movements have been determined in large part by three main factors: the political situation, the economic conditions, and the influence of alternating views over the relative importance of class and gender. These movements cannot be defined or explained by Western definitions of feminism. Pornography, the relation between stereotypes and gender socialization, and the interaction between gender, class and ideology are traditional feminist interests in the First World (van Zoonen, 1994). Moreover, there is a whole typology of feminisms which include liberal feminism, Marxist-socialist feminism, radical feminism, psychoanalytic feminism and cultural feminism. Cirksena and Cuklanz (1992) have described these feminisms in terms of the dualisms with which they are concerned.[2] But these interests and typologies do not apply well to Third World women's movements in general, and to Latin America's movements in particular. In Latin America, there are three main strands of women's movements: human rights groups, "classic" feminist groups, and organizations of poor urban women (Jaquette, 1989). The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo exemplify the first of these strands.

The Mothers have been studied by scholars from different perspectives and fields. Their story has been told (Simpson & Bennet, 1985; Bousquet, 1983) and their voices have been heard (Fisher, 1989; Agosin, 1990; Chelala, 1993). Human rights scholars have analyzed the transformation of groups of mothers into human rights activists, exploring the personal, political, and cultural basis for that transformation and the effectiveness of these groups (Malin, 1994). Navarro (1989) argues that it is in the nature of the military regime that we can find the origins of the Mother's militancy and activism. She stresses that it is precisely their condition of mothers which not only united them, but also protected them from a repressive state that initially dismissed them because they were "only" mothers.

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[2] Liberal feminism as concerned with the dualism reason v. emotion; socialist feminism with the public v. the private sphere; radical feminism with the debate between nature and culture, psychoanalytic feminism with the relation subject:object as it relates to gender, and cultural feminism with the dichotomy between mind and body (Cirksena & Cuklanz, 1992).

Feminist scholars have also studied the Mothers telling their story (Femenia, 1987) and arguing over their success or lack of it. In her book Revolutionizing Motherhood, Marguerite G. Bouvard (1994) underscores the Mothers' legacy for women's resistance and human rights groups. For Bouvard the Mothers represent one of the best examples of women fighting for practical gender interests. She underscores that the Mothers are not interested in eliminating maternity as gender identification, "but rather in creating a political role for the values of love and the caring work associated with maternity" (p. 187). On the other hand, other feminist commentators have chided the Mothers for holding on to these maternal images which they see as supporting patriarchal authority. Maria del Carmen Feijóo (1989) criticizes the Mothers for their stand on maternity which she feels only reinforces the conventional sexual division of labor. The dispute about these two feminist analyses is yet another example of the continuous debate between the feminine and the feminist. The former privileges the struggle for practical gender interests and the latter focuses on the importance of strategic gender interests.[3] The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo along with similar women's human rights groups and the movements of poor urban women in Latin America exemplify the feminine, the emphasis on practical gender interests. Therefore, much

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[3] Molyneaux (1985) defines practical gender interests as derived from "the concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender division of labour...Practical interests are usually a response to immediate perceived need, and they do not entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality" (p. 233). On the other hand, women's strategic gender interests are derived "from the analysis of their subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory set of arrangements from those which exist" (p. 232).

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of the feminist analysis done on these groups has focused on using them to demonstrate whether the feminine is more important than the feminist or viceversa. Like Bouvard, Rohini Hensman (1996), believes that although these organizations started out with feminine concerns, their experiences "inevitably politicised them" (p. 50). The involvement of women in these (feminine) organizations leads them to feminist concerns and strategies.

Some communication scholars have also analyzed the Mothers. Susana Kaiser (1996) looked at their communication strategies and Valeria Fabj (1993) studied their rhetoric and how they have chosen to speak in the public sphere by using voices from the private realm, namely the voices of motherhood which Fabj argues have been shaped by the myth of *marianismo*—the myth of the good mother.[4] Regardless of their perspective—historical, political, feminist, rhetorical—most scholars have looked at the life cycle of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo as an organization within the changing Argentine reality. But how have the media presented the Mothers? People's perceptions of reality are heavily dependent on the media. The media construct and define the events for their audience assigning to these events different degrees of importance. News stories are narratives that "acquire layers of meanings in the course of their use in everyday life; some are authentic, others are contrived and all are constructed" (Aulich, 1993, p. 3). Although the Mothers started marching in April of 1977, it was not until the fourth anniversary march in 1981 that the Argentine press turned out in strength to see them. Such was the repressive nature of the military regime. What about the international media? International support groups have been crucial for the

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[4] Evelyn Stevens (1973) defines *marianismo* as "the cult of feminine spiritual superiority, which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men" (p. 91). It originates both in the veneration of the Virgin Mary and in the ancient myth of the mother goddess as the source of life. These origins are deeply entrenched in Latin American culture. Women's "spiritual strength, moral superiority, and capacity for self-sacrifice, especially in her roles as mother, render her semi-divine" (Fabj, 1993, p. 5). Latin American women, therefore, are expected to be good daughters and wives, but most importantly, they are expected to be good mothers. They are identified primarily as mothers.

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Mothers (Fisher, 1989; Bouvard, 1994). Media coverage is in turn essential for these groups to "know" about the Mothers and their struggle. This paper examines The New York Times coverage of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo from 1977 until today exploring how the Mothers have been constructed in this major U.S. newspaper.

IDEOLOGY AND THE MEDIA

Underlying this paper are the challenge that cultural studies posits to traditional positivist media research and its break with the dominant research model of stimulus-response. The theoretical framework of this study emphasizes the ideological role of the media which are viewed as a crucial cultural and ideological force (Hall, 1982). Berger (1995) sees ideology as serving a function: it serves the interest of ruling groups and stabilizes society, and it deludes those groups that do not rule about their situation, their possibilities, their real interests" (p. 59). For Althusser (1971) ideology is more than a set of ideas, it is a praxis that is reproduced through society's institutions and practices: education, religion, family, the media. Ideology is reproduced in the media through the definition and representation of the different groups of society. The media then, do not reflect reality, they define it. This definition "implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping: not merely the transmitting of an already-existing meaning, but the more active labour of *making things mean*" (Hall, 1982, p. 64). The implication for media studies is huge: the message must be analyzed in terms of its "ideological structuration" (p. 64) not simply in terms of its manifest content. The media are signifying agents and they produce meaning and "knowledge" based on an implicit, unwritten grammar, a set of codes, an ideology.

Underlying this critical paradigm is a notion of power as a hegemonic force which is used by an elite to shape reality. The social formation presents us with a monopoly of power by these elites with the consent of many. Hegemony refers to a condition in which a dominant group leads a society and the subordinate groups seem to support and subscribe to the values and meanings set by the dominant group (Gramsci, 1971). These ideas, values and meanings constitute a dominant ideology which is reproduced in the Althusserian sense through the mass media. Also underlying this critical paradigm is the acknowledgement that the function of language is more powerful and complex than simply referential. Language organizes reality, constructs it, and ultimately provides us with our only access to it. In consequence the media's signifying role is crucial to the production of knowledge. Foucault's work (1979;1981) demonstrates how power works through discourse, which is a way of defining and organizing reality: "power produces knowledge...power and knowledge directly imply one another...there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1979, p. 27).

IDEOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE OF WOMEN

Research indicates that U.S. media coverage of women's issues and women newsmakers is scant and inadequate. In 1992 a one-month study of the three major news magazines—Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report—showed that references about women averaged only 13 percent of total references ("Women still ignored," 1992). Coverage of outstanding female leaders on key pages and in network newscasts is minimal and females are portrayed negatively far more often than males ("1994 Page-One References," 1994). The problem is pervasive not only in U.S. media, but in international media as well. The first-ever international study on the representation and portrayal of women in the media, the Global Media Monitoring Project, concluded that although there are more women journalists, women are rarely used as news sources and they are often portrayed as victims ("Long-Awaited Global Media," 1995).

In 1995, the year of the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson, coverage of women in U.S. print and broadcast news dropped dramatically nevertheless. Previous tendencies in the coverage of women such as: (a) the demonization of female leaders, (b) the invisibility of women's opinions, commentaries and activities in international news stories (Enloe, 1989), and (c) the proclivity to portray women as victims, especially Third World women (Mohanty, 1991), continued to be present (Bridge, 1997). The main products of these tendencies are the trivialization of women's news and the portrayals of women who are either demons or victims and whose opinions are not important. In turn, these products represent the covert tendency of society in general and the media in particular to perpetuate an ideology that continuously devalues and debases women. "Most existing news about women is trivial—related to family status or appearance. Where important women's activities are covered, they are often simultaneously undermined or demeaned. U.S. news, of course, shows a similar pattern, including its coverage of international women's activities" (Steeves, 1989). Maria Mies (1986) argues that "capitalism cannot function without patriarchy" (p. 38). Patriarchy and capitalism pervade all structures of society infiltrating them with their ideologies. The media corporations are not exempted from this infiltration, they are actually crucial for the maintenance of the capitalist/patriarchy status quo. Therefore, news coverage of women reproduces the dominant male-based ideology that resents women in power, disdains women wrongdoers and ignores for the most part women as interlocutors of reality.

METHOD

Content analysis, probably the best known of textual methodologies, is limited to the study of the manifest content of texts. The focus is on classifying the text into categories, which are then quantified in order to determine what the text says (Berelson, 1952). Content analysis does not deal with the latent content of texts, which is essential to the study of historical, cultural, and social processes.

Textual analysis, on the other hand, recognizes that texts are polysemic. That is, they do not have "a" meaning. Its practitioners argue that meaning is a social production and that language "is the means by which the role of the media is changed from that of conveyors of reality to that of constructors of meaning" (Curtin, 1995, p. 3). Through language, reality is constructed and a dominant reading of the text is produced which positions the reader in relation to the text. Textual analysis is the chosen methodology because it acknowledges that the text constructs reality. It also recognizes that in the process of attempting to record history, the text actually *creates* history (Lester, 1994).

THE MOTHERS OF PLAZA DE MAYO IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Dirty War

On March 24, 1976, General Jorge Rafael Videla (army), Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera (navy) and Brigadier Ramón Agosti (air force) deposed Isabel Perón and instituted themselves as a ruling military junta. They suspended Congress, appointed justices for the Supreme Court and provincial high courts, dismissed most members of the judiciary, took control of broadcast media, and established a censorship system for the printed media. They told the population that they required complete control of the state in order to rescue the country from chaos and anarchy. Under the banner of eradicating subversion and stabilizing the economy, the Junta engaged in a "war against subversion" which they called "holy war" or "dirty war." Their definition of "subversive" included "guerrillas, Marxists of varying persuasion, liberals, and reform-minded Catholics and Jews, as well as those suspected of actively, remotely, or accidentally, willingly or unwillingly, aiding or abetting terrorists" (Navarro, 1989, p. 244). These "subversives" were abducted in their homes, in their workplaces, in their schools, or simply in the streets. The abductions were part of the clandestine arm of the military government. Home abductions typically took place in the middle of the night. Heavily armed men dressed in civilian clothes and working in groups of five to ten would arrive in unmarked vehicles, mistreat all the members of the family including women, children and the elderly, loot their homes and take one, some, or even all the members of the family with them. Those who were taken became *desaparecidos*.[5] Most of them were never seen again. They were usually taken to one of the hundreds of infamous detention centers where they were savagely tortured and eventually murdered.

Mothers of the Disappeared and the Military Regime

Relatives then started an endless and unsuccessful search for those missing. They went to the police, the military, the ministries and received no answer. "They found themselves in a Kafkaesque situation. They had to prove that a son or a daughter had been kidnapped to authorities who denied that abductions occurred in Argentina" (p. 247). Increasingly, these relatives were also ostracized from their friends and other relatives who feared that any connection to "subversives" would make them disappear too. It was during this frantic search that some mothers started comparing their stories and decided to meet in each other's homes (Fisher, 1989).

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[5] "Most of the *desaparecidos* were young people between the ages of twenty and thirty. A significant number were in their thirties, but there were also teenagers, infants, children, and senior citizens in their seventies. Most were blue collar workers, followed by students and white collar workers. A substantial number were professionals, especially lawyers and teachers. There were also housewives, journalists, priests, nuns, and conscripts" (Navarro, 1989, p. 243).

On April 30, fourteen Mothers walked around the obelisk that stands in Plaza de Mayo for the first time. It was a Saturday at 11:30 am and the square was mostly empty. They decided on marching again on Thursdays at 3:30 pm before the banks closed. Five months later, The New York Times printed its first reference to them. The story, headlined "Argentine women in weekly protest over abductions," is from Associated Press. It identified the group as "relatives of victims of hundreds of kidnapping by armed squads" and described their weekly meetings ("Argentine women," 1977, p. 7). In November, U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance visited Argentina for negotiations related to nuclear weapons. A story bylined by special NYT correspondent Juan de Onis chronicles the visit and mentions that in a ceremony in Buenos Aires "about 100 women, relatives of missing persons, shouted 'Help us!'" (de Onis, 1977, p. 3). A photograph of the pleading women wearing white headscarves is included. However, this story does not relate these women with the ones that are meeting weekly in Plaza de Mayo.

On December after working on a full-page ad to be printed in La Nación, nine members of the group were kidnapped including a French nun who was helping them. Two days later, Azucena Villaflor de Vicenti—the Mothers leader—and another French nun were abducted from their homes. They were never seen again. The abductions were a huge blow to the group. By then, however, the Mothers had developed a distinct style and rhetoric that included wearing a white shawl embroidered with the name of their *desaparecido* and the date of his or her abduction. They also carried photographs of their missing relatives while circling the obelisk of Plaza de Mayo. The abductions were reported on a January 29 story about the human rights situation in Argentina and the U.S. position toward it. Although those kidnapped are referred simply as "13 relatives of missing persons" (de Onis, 1978[a], p. 12), the story mentioned how and where they were abducted. This and a follow-up story printed on April 12 center on the two French nuns, the reference to the "11 other women who were preparing a statement for publication" is only a passing one (de Onis, 1978[b], p. 5).

For most of 1978, the Mothers played cat-and-mouse with the Argentinean police in the Plaza. The government started a deliberate campaign to ridicule the women labeling them as *Las Locas* [mad women] in order to isolate them and to discourage other opposing groups (Bouvard, 1994). In June the World Cup was played in Argentina. The Mothers kept marching spoiling the Junta's efforts to dispel increasing international rumors about human rights violations. However, in the aftermath of the World Cup, special correspondent de Onis wrote a thorough story about the general situation in Argentina without mentioning the Mothers or any other resistance group. Meanwhile, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo decided to become a registered organization. Almost at the same time, another group of women was formed—the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo—their goal was to find their grandchildren who had either disappeared with their parents or who had been born in captivity.

The Mothers became increasingly visible in the Plaza and the Junta responded by banning public meetings such as theirs. The Mothers responded by meeting illegally in churches that would allow them[6] and by travelling abroad to the United Stated and Italy to present their plea to the United Nations, other human rights groups, and to governments that were willing to listen

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[6] The relationship of the Mothers to the Argentinean Catholic Church has been very rocky. While some priests and nuns helped the Mothers and other relatives of the disappeared, the ecclesiastical hierarchy denied the families of the victims of the repression any support while maintaining close ties with the military regime (Fisher, 1989; Schirmer, 1993).

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(Fisher, 1989; Bouvard, 1994). The Times never mentioned this trip nor did it mention the Mothers' struggle to reclaim the Plaza de Mayo.

The year of 1978 was marked by international pressure to clarify the human rights situation in Argentina. As a result, the Junta started destroying records of the Dirty War, freed journalist Jacobo Timerman[7] and enacted two laws: "Presumption of Death because of Disappearance"[8], and the "Social Security Benefits in the Case of the Absence of the Person"[9] (Schirmer, 1993). The Mothers strongly rejected both laws which implied that the desaparecidos "were no more than unregistered deaths" (p. 38). The Times first mention to the Mothers as an organized group is found buried in a story about how the Junta is preparing for a visit by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. The story gives the reader the Junta's line from beginning to end especially in its reference to the Mothers as "a group of mothers of missing people known as the 'Mad Ladies of Plaza de Mayo.' The women got the name by demonstrating for information in the downtown plaza" (de Onis, 1979, p. A12). The enactment of the "Presumption of Death because of Disappearance" Law was reported in a Times story from Associated Press in September. Although the Mothers were the strongest voice opposing this law, the story does not mention them preferring to use the blanket reference "opponents of the law" ("New law," 1979, p. 7).

In 1980 more than 2,000 marching Mothers reclaimed the Plaza the Mayo from the military and finally the first two direct references to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo surfaced in the

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[7] Jacobo Timerman—editor of the Buenos Aires daily La Opinión—was kidnapped, tortured, detained and finally released. His book Prisoner without a name, cell without a number (1981), is his personal account of these experiences.

[8] which declared dead those who had been reported missing during the previous five years (Law 22.068).

[9] which gave relatives the right to claim social security benefits upon presentation of evidence that a person had been absent for more than a year (Law 22.062) .

Times. The first one, by special correspondent Edward Schumacher, appeared in October in a story about Nobel peace prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel who "has been working with the so-called mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who frequently gather before the presidential palace here to carry on a lonely vigil for their missing children" (Schumacher, 1980, sec. A, p. 1). The second reference is found in a story datelined in Washington, DC regarding a meeting of the Organization for American States. The presence of four Mothers is acknowledged in the story: "four mothers of missing persons who belong to the socalled [sic] Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, who meet every Thursday outside Argentina's presidential offices, awaiting some official word" (de Onis, 1980, sec. A, p. 7). Both references although important for being the first ones are inside stories that are not about the Mothers but related to human rights. The fact that both references use the qualifier "so-called" which means "popularly known as" diminishes slightly the legitimacy of the name. Moreover, both references are extremely vague about the Mothers' activities. Schumacher 's "frequently gather ... to carry on a lonely vigil for their missing children" does not even acknowledge the extreme regularity of the Mothers' protest, which the statement tones down to a "vigil." It also presents the Mothers as being alone in their plea. The statement by de Onis is also extremely vague and does not give the Mothers any agency presenting them as "awaiting some official word," a very passive attitude which does not reflect the Mothers' activism.

In 1981 Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency of the United States moving his foreign policy away from Jimmy Carter's stress on human rights. Reagan managed to reverse the U.S. Congress' ban on aid for Argentina, a country he perceived as friendly toward U.S. and important for its foreign policy in Central America. Meanwhile, the Mothers activism and reputation had grown enormously. On the fourth anniversary of their first march a large number of foreign correspondents were present. It was the first time they were able to march without police intervention (Goñi, 1995). This march proved to be a watershed regarding the Times coverage of the Mothers. There were three important stories about them. The first two came in consecutive days, before and after the march. "A reporter's notebook: Mothers' vigil in Argentina" (Schumacher, 1981[a], sec. A, p. 2) chronicles the Mothers' weekly demonstrations to provide background for the second story "1,000 Argentines defy ban to march in rights protest" (Schumacher, 1981[b], sec. A, p. 5) which reports the fourth anniversary march as the first successful demonstration of such magnitude since the military took over.

Through the third story "Argentine mothers won't let hope die" (Schumacher, 1981[c], sec. A, p. 15) the Mothers are finally given a voice. The story is built around Sara Rumani de Goitea's testimony to Schumacher. He identifies her as "one of a group of mothers who march every Thursday in the Plaza de Mayo on behalf of their missing sons and daughters" (sec. A, p. 15). The picture that Schumacher draws elicits pity for this woman. From his admission that at least once a week one of the Mothers knocks on his door "hoping to find someone who will help or at least listen," to his comment "[t]here was no way of knowing how true her story was. More than 6,000 people are said to have disappeared at the hands of state security forces hunting terrorists after the military took power in a coup five years ago. Some, perhaps most, were terrorists" (sec. A, p. 15), the reader is lead to see this woman's immense suffering but is also lead to doubt her statement that her *desaparecido* "was such a good son" (sec. A, p. 15). It is not that Schumacher conveys that he does not believe in her, but that he believes she does not know any better. Her "ignorance" makes her a victim too. In spite of this picture, the story is important because it gives the Mothers (at least one of them) a voice, even if the reporter qualifies that voice. It is also the first time that the group is acknowledged as a registered organization "of about 2,500 members founded four years ago by 14 women who came to know each other for their almost daily inquiries at the Interior Ministry for their missing children" (sec. A, p. 15).

The Beginning of the End

The Falklands/Malvinas War dominated Argentinean reality in 1982. The invasion that prompted the war came after the Mothers were joined by unions, human rights groups and the political parties in a huge demonstration of more than 15,000 people against the military regime in March. With the invasion of the Malvinas the Junta attempted and succeeded in calming down the different sectors. The war elicited a sense of nationalism and pride in the otherwise weary population. While the country feverishly rallied around the flag, the Mothers kept marching with very little support since they were perceived as traitors to the country. The New York Times covered thoroughly the Falklands/Malvinas War. On April 30 the United States government officially sided with Great Britain in the conflict. A month later a story by special correspondent Richard J. Meislin analyzed the Mothers' continuous plight amid Argentina's nationalistic fever: "In the Plaza de Mayo, the scene in recent weeks of several huge demonstrations of patriotic fervor over the Falklands, relatives of the 'desaparecidos,' or 'the disappeared,' continued their somber weekly marches" (Meislin, 1982, sec. A, p. 5). The story emphasizes the peaceful, silent marches of these women wearing "white kerchiefs on their heads" and carrying photographs of their *desaparecidos* (sec. A, p. 5).

Soon the war was over and with it Argentina finally saw the light at the end of the tunnel. Members of the Junta were substituted by other military officers who decided to prepare the country for its transition to democracy. After the end of the war, the Times coverage dwindled. Only the March of Resistance organized by the Mothers to mark Human Rights Day was covered in a very short story from UPI which succinctly explained how the march had been blocked by the Argentine police ("300 policemen," 1982).

In 1983, the last year of the military regime, Argentina finally paid homage to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo acknowledging them as the conscience of the nation. Meanwhile the military prepared their exit by destroying evidence of the "Dirty War" and by enacting in September the "Law of National Pacification," a legal attempt to pardon themselves. On December 9, the day before president elect Raúl Alfonsín took office, the Mothers marched for the last time against the military regime carrying with them 30,000 silhouettes representing the 30,000 *desaparecidos*. Still, a Times story presented the *desaparecidos* as probable subversives: "It is unlikely any of the disappeared are alive, and many were surely terrorists" (Schumacher, 1983a, sec. A, p. 1). The relatives are portrayed now as an important political force[10] because of "their obsession to obtain investigations and, often, vengeance" (sec.A, p. 1).

The "Law of National Pacification" was passed on September 3, the Times reported it on September 24 emphasizing the vigorous reaction of human rights groups and quoting Hebe de Bonafini, president of the Mothers, as a representative opinion (Schumacher, 1983b). By the end of the year, Raúl Alfonsín had assumed the presidency, appointed CONADEP[11], repealed the amnesty, and ordered the court-martialing of nine former junta members. The differences between the Mothers and the Alfonsín government were evidenced in a December 17 story:

> About the only complaints have come from human rights leaders who demand that the Government prosecutions be broadened. 'The assassin himself is guilty, too' Hebe de Bonafini, head of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, which represents relatives of those who disappeared, said in an interview. Mr. Alfonsín, urging that

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[10] The story concedes that 4,000 people are marching now with the Mothers.

[11] National Commission on the Disappeared People.

> vengeance be avoided, has said that the Government will not initiate prosecutions of servicemen who just followed orders (Shumacher, 1983c, sec. 1, p. 1).

It was the second time in the same year that the word "vengeance" was associated with the Mothers.

Democracy: No Relief

The discovery of the horrors of the Dirty War pervaded Argentina during 1984. President Alfonsín organized a National Commission on the Disappeared People (CONADEP) for the investigation of the fate of the *desaparecidos*. CONADEP (1984) issued a report which later was published under the name *Nunca Mas* [Never Again]. The Commission gathered fifty thousand pages of evidence from the victims and their families. No evidence was gathered regarding the victims' abductors, torturers and murderers (CONADEP, 1984).[12] The country was horrified by these findings. Horror stories filled the media and after some time, the people could not assimilate them any more. They started wanting to forget. But forgetting was precisely what the Mothers opposed. They wanted the country to focus on the perpetrators of the horrors, not on the victims. The country wanted to bury the victims, the Mothers wanted to keep them alive. The Mothers, who had been glorified as the conscience of Argentina, started to realize that the country was resisting having a conscience at all. At the same time, the Alfonsín government subjected all relatives of *desaparecidos* to intense pressure to accept the exhumation and identification of the thousands of bodies found in unmarked graves throughout the country. The Mothers refused to accept these exhumations rejecting again the government's focus on the victims and not on the perpetrators. They also started using their most controversial slogan: *Aparición con vida* [Reappearance with life].[13]

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[12] The Mothers took serious issue with Nunca Mas because of its emphasis on mass extermination and the disposal of corpses and because they felt it meant to show that the disappeared were dead....They criticized the report for its omission of the names of the torturers, for the fact that it contained information that had been known for years, and, most important, for not stressing in its categorization of the victims that the vast majority consisted of the political opposition while only a very small number were actual terrorists (Bouvard, 1994, p. 136).

As the horror of discovering the truth behind the *desaparecidos* spread in Argentina, the Times coverage focused on the consequences of such horror for the political and economic situation of Argentina. News stories tackled delicate topics such as the extent of the responsibility of those who committed crimes while following orders (Schumacher, 1984[a]), the psychological damage done to the children of the disappeared (Schumacher, 1984[i]), the feelings of guilt of certain Argentine sectors (Timerman, 1984; Simons, 1984; Resnizky 1984), the fragility of Argentina's new democracy (Schumacher, 1984[b]), and the report by CONADEP (Chavez, 1984). The New York Times quoted the Mothers in these stories treating them as an "authority" in human rights. However, the Mothers were also described as "particularly militant" (Schumacher, 1984[b], sec. 4, p. 3). In a long analysis of the first six months of the presidency of Alfonsín, Schumacher explained how the president "has complained that his former colleagues in the rights movement are seeking vengeance, not justice" (Schumacher, 1984[b], sec. 6, p. 26). The Mothers position toward the military is described as "hatred," reducing to that single word all the complexity behind the Mothers stance in relation to the sector responsible for the fate of the *desaparecidos*.

By 1985, 59 percent of Argentines did not approve of the Mothers' activities (FEDEFAM, 1987). The Argentine media started avoiding the Mothers and destroying their image. The Mothers then started publishing their own newspaper. Meanwhile members of the three juntas went on trial while a wave of bomb attacks hit Argentina. People feared a coup attempt and President Alfonsín declared a stage of siege. Two members of the first junta were sentenced to life, the third member received four and a half years. Two members of the second junta received eighteen and eight years, while the third member and the three members of the third junta were acquitted. The Mothers felt betrayed and increasingly alienated.[14] The Times reported the trial and underscored the sharply different reactions to the sentences. Human rights groups "were angered by the acquittals" (Chavez, 1985, sec. A, p. 12), while most political leaders accepted the decision. Hebe de Bonafini's sudden departure from the courtroom is explained as a product of her anger at the acquittals. No reference is made to the fact that the court had forbidden her and the other Mothers to wear their headscarves inside the courtroom. For the first time, a story quotes leaders of several human rights groups and does not quote any of the Mothers (Chavez, 1985).

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[13] "[T]he truth is we know they've killed them. *Aparición con vida* means that although the majority of them are dead, no one has taken responsibility for their deaths, because no one has said who killed them, who gave the order...We are fighting for all the disappeared and it's for this reason we continue demanding *aparición con vida*" (Carmen de Guede as quoted in Fisher, 1984, p. 128).

The trial of the junta members and its result turned the Mothers into radicals. (Bouvard, 1994). The radicalization of the Mothers compounded with the increasing disapproval of them by Argentina's public opinion lead to a split in the organization in 1986. Twelve Mothers departed choosing the name *Línea Fundadora* [Founding Line] of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. These Mothers disagreed with the organization's stance regarding the exhumations and wanted to work with the political system as a human rights interest group, not as a radical opposition group (Bouvard, 1994). It is important to note that class distinctions seem to underlie the split of the organization. The Founding Line is composed of women from the upper and middle classes who strongly resented the Mothers' president Hebe de Bonafini for her radical and combative style. Bonafini and the majority of the Mothers who did not depart are from the working class.[15]

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[14] "In the courtroom they always referred to the accused as General someone, Admiral so and so, and the victims were always called 'terrorists' and 'subversives'. When they went to court to hear their sentences they were allowed to wear their military uniforms. We, as *Madres de Plaza de Mayo,* weren't allowed to wear our headscarves" (Carmen de Guede as quoted in Fisher, 1989, p. 141.) Hebe de Bonafini decided to leave the courtroom when she was forced to choose between staying and wearing ther headscarf.

The split is reported in February of 1987. It is the first story fully dedicated to the Mothers since 1981 and describes their weekly march as a "scene [that] has the atmosphere of a reunion of aging cousins or old friends...photographers recording the event are as likely to be tourists as journalists" (Christians, 1987, sec. 1, p. 4). Differences and similarities between the two groups are explained through the voices of the leaders of the two factions: Hebe de Bonafini and Maria Adela de Antokoletz. The story, accompanied by a photo of demonstrators in Buenos Aires, ends on a note of unity: "despite their differences, Mrs. Antokoletz said she and those who share her views continued to march in the plaza every week" (sec. 1, p. 4).

In December of 1986, Alfonsín signed the law of *punto final* [full stop] which set a time limit on new prosecutions of military officers. Congress then sanctioned the law of *obediencia debida* [due obedience] which in turn limited responsibility to the top generals only. Charges against 300 officers were dropped and the Supreme Court even overruled the sentences of some officers already convicted (Fisher, 1989). The worst fears of the Mothers became a reality: nobody would pay for the crimes committed against their children.

Despite the importance of these events, the Times coverage of Argentina and the Mothers is reduced to four stories in 1986. One of them reviews a documentary (Goodman, 1986), another reviews a book (Chelala, 1986), the third one is a piece about doing tourism in Buenos Aires:

> In front of the Casa Rosada (which serves as the office of President Raúl Alfonsín), is the Plaza de Mayo, which gained international fame as the site of protest marches by a group of women called the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo; the women have been protesting the disappearance of more than 9,000 people in the anti-subversion campaign conducted by the military regimes that ruled form 1976 to 1983. Guided

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[15] Telephone interview with Marjorie Agosin, March 4, 1997.

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> tour operators are often asked about the women when buses drive by the Plaza de Mayo. The women still march symbolically, every Thursday from 3:30 P.M. to 4 P.M., to draw attention to what they consider the slow pace of trials of those accused in the disappearances (Christian, 1986[a], sec. 10, p. 10).

In the ultimate simplification, the Mothers—along with their plight for human rights—are reduced to a Buenos Aires tourist attraction.

The fourth story of 1986 deals with the *Punto Final* [Full Stop] Law (Christian, 1986[b]). It acknowledges that the law was drafted under pressure from the military leaders and that 50,000 people protested against its enactment. The story tells us that while congress was debating the law, "several women from the group known as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo were expelled from the galleries after they tossed leaflets and shouted "traitor" at a leading Radical senator" (Christian, 1986[b], sec. D, p. 15). The reporter does not interview the Mothers in order to get an explanation for their attitude. In consequence, their behavior is presented as irrational. In sharp contrast with this depiction, the story ends by quoting a Catholic Cardinal as saying that what the country needs is a "spirit of general reconciliation" and not "public confessions" (sec. D, p. 15). Words that sound well but that obscure the horrifying fact that those responsible for the disappearance of 30,000 human beings will be free thanks to a "spirit of general reconciliation."

The years of 1987 and 1988 were characterized by continuous threats of coup attempts and by increasing ties between the government and the military in order to avoid a real coup d'etat. In January 1989 an attack by a left-wing splinter group in *La Tablada* was followed by a wave of repression from the government. The Mothers voiced their discontent and their belief that the repressive apparatus was still in place. While the Mothers dealt with a country shaken by repeated coup attempts and with a president continuously negotiating with the military in order to maintain democracy, The New York Times only mentioned them again in a story about tourism in Buenos

Aires. "To experience some of its [Buenos Aires] history, sit in the Plaza de Mayo in front of the presidential palace at 3:30 P.M. on Thursday. That's when the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo still march to remind the nation of an estimated 9,000 people who disappeared in the counterinsurgency campaign of the 1976-1983 military government" (Christian, 1988, sec. 5, p. 10). This time the prospective tourist is instructed to sit down while the Mothers march in order "to experience some history." In this way, the Mothers are simplified, objectified and reduced. The reader and the tourist are not encouraged to analyze just to "take" this simplified, romanticized version of the Mothers as one more attraction, one more curiosity in this foreign country.

Carlos Menem versus the Mothers

Submerged in a deep economic crisis, Argentina elected Carlos Menem as its new president in 1989. He applied strong economic measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund and granted a blanket pardon to all involved in the Dirty War. A year later he pardoned Videla, Viola and Massera provoking the wrath of the Mothers who campaigned against these pardons. The Times coverage concentrated on his handling of government-military relations. In a passing reference to an attempt against the life of Hebe de Bonafini, special correspondent James Brooke defines the Mothers as a group "composed of mothers of Argentines who disappeared during the military's war against leftists" (Brooke, 1989, sec. 1, part 1, p, 1). After six years of democratic government, the *desaparecidos*, are once again branded as "leftists" delegitimizing, in consequence, the Mothers' plight for justice. Menem's blanket pardon is reported and Renee Epelbaum (from the Founding Line) is incorrectly identified as "a leader of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" and quoted as the opposing voice of Menem's action ("200 military," 1989, sec. 1, part 1, p. 12).

The relationship between President Menem and the Mothers has been extremely confrontational. Menem does not hide his personal disapproval of the Mothers and in 1991, amid a series of threats, the offices of the organization were ransacked three times. For her part, Hebe de Bonafini referred to Menem as *basura* [garbage] on a television program in Spain. Menem sued her on charges of contempt for authority and labeled her "national traitor" (Bouvard, 1994). During his government, the Mothers have seen a steady decrease in membership and an increase in the public's incomprehension for their cause. From 1990 to 1994, years characterized by the growing confrontation between the Mothers and Carlos Menem, the Times did not print a single story mentioning the Mothers and their increasingly difficult situation in Argentina.

However, in 1995 the country received a wake-up call with the declarations of Adolfo Francisco Scilingo a former military officer who acknowledged that the military regime had disposed of hundreds of desaparecidos by throwing them unconscious but alive into the ocean from military planes. President Menem replied by calling Scilingo a crook (Gray, 1995). Scilingo's disclosure was reported in all major newspapers in the world including The New York Times (Sims, 1995^{a}). Like in old times, the Mothers were quoted as the "expert" opinion in the topic. The reverberations of Scilingo's revelations were felt in Argentina for a while. Human rights groups holding "raucous protests" (Sims, 1995^{b}, sec. 1, p. 4) pressed the government to release a new list with 1,000 additional names of *desaparecidos*, confirming the Mothers long-held suspicion that the government was still concealing information about the Dirty War.

In contrast to these grim revelations, the only other reference to the Mothers in 1995 is in yet another article about tourism in Buenos Aires. There—among information about hotels, restaurants and night life—it is recommended to go to "the heart of the city" —the Plaza de Mayo—which is "most famous for the demonstrations of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo,

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whose children disappeared in the military's "dirty war" on the leftist in the 1970s. Their protests are held on Thursdays between 3:30 and 4 P.M" (Sims, 1995^{c}, sec. 5, p. 10). It is paradoxical that in this article what is important is the Plaza, not what the women are doing there, although the Plaza is "most famous" precisely because of the women.

Today Menem is serving a second term as president of Argentina. The country is continuously struggling between forgetting and remembering, between approving and disapproving of the Mothers. Sometimes the group seems too radical for the average Argentinean. Sometimes, the population is cruelly reminded that forgetting is not possible since it seems that the repressive apparatus is still in place in a country where the police is notoriously brutal. The Mothers resurfaced in The New York Times in 1996 thanks to the Argentine police behavior toward them. "It was a scene that Argentina will not soon forget: blood oozing from the white headscarf of Hebe de Bonafini" (Sims, 1996^{a}, sec. 1, p. 4). The story goes on to describe Bonafini as a controversial personality who is praised and despised at the same time. Several opinions are quoted about her, most of them negative: "this is a woman who needs a cause...she has a militant capacity and is fighting for anything that will give her power. Her typical attitude is to question and fight against any force" (sec. 1, p. 4). The article states that the Mothers "have adopted an attitude of permanent confrontation with the democratic government of President Carlos Saul Menem" and omits the threats, legal suits and looting that they have endured during Menem's government. The reporter, special correspondent Calvin Sims, explains why and how the movement has broadened the spectrum of its protest, quoting several opinions about this change in the organization.

In June of 1996, Sims wrote a story about police abuse in Argentina. It made passing reference to Bonafini's beating, but most importantly it suggested that police brutality is endemic in

Argentina (Sims, 1996[b]). The Times reported how the police ejected the Mothers from Plaza de Mayo in August. Sims pointed out that the Mothers are mostly elderly women now: He quoted one of the Mothers as saying "it was a flashback to the dictatorship" (Sims, 1996[c], sec. 1, p. 6). Interestingly, the Mothers resurfaced in the pages of the Times when conditions similar to the ones that made them famous also resurfaced in Argentina.

CONCLUSIONS

Feminist approaches to research have placed gender on the academic agenda. Popular culture has been the object of a great deal of feminist analysis. "Cultural politics are crucially important to feminism because they involve struggles over meaning" (Barret, 1982, p. 37). The creation of meaning is the process by which we impose a certain order in our everyday experiences. Media representations are a crucial element in this struggle over meaning. Research documents women's "serioús underrepresentation as newsmakers and sources in print and broadcast news" (Rakow & Kranich, 1991, p. 9). In consequence, the media ignores or displays in a particular way women, women's issues, feminism, and women's movements such as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.

These patterns of absence and/or deformation of the representation of women's issues are particularly important since news discourse is generally considered an "authoritative version of reality" (Barker-Plummer, 1995, p. 308). News reporting privileges some as authorized "knowers" and in consequence privileges their versions of reality as the "truth." News, then is a political resource and feminist scholars believe it is used within a patriarchal framework that denies women their rightful place in society. Women in the news "not only do they speak less frequently, but they tend to speak as passive reactors and witnesses to public events rather than as participants of those events" (Holland, 1987, p. 139).

For all the drama and for all the human rights issues involved, the story of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo as told by The New York Times is superficial most of the time. When background information is given, it is about Argentina, not about the Mothers. What identifies them as a group is their "motherhood" and their human rights activism. Their "womanhood," the fact that in a very repressive regime, women were the first ones who dared to openly oppose the government, is never highlighted. The Mothers ideology or ideologies are never explicit, except when they are related to the Left. Their opinions, although far from invisible, are not presented constantly. The presence of their opinions follows the ups and downs of Argentina's public approval of the Mothers. In the post-heroic years of 1983 and 1984, their opinions were highly regarded and constantly quoted. After 1985, their opinions and interpretations became increasingly invisible. Therefore, the caliber of their authority is established on the basis of Argentina's public opinion about them. This precludes coverage of the main difference between the Mothers and the Argentine people: the Mothers cannot and will not forget the Dirty War while Argentina tries very hard to forget it.

There is a tendency in the coverage to trivialize the Mothers and their issues. Consequently, their plight is demeaned. Little coverage is devoted to their confrontations with the different governments and their struggle to be heard. The Times tendency to trivialize the Mothers is most evident after 1985, when the only mentions to them are in the tourism section. The description of the Mothers as a tourist attraction ultimately objectifies them and also objectifies Argentina's traumatic past. The tourist is encouraged to look at them as a museum piece, as one more monument in Buenos Aires, as a surrogate way "to experience history." This places the Mothers in the past and makes them look anachronic in the present. Victimization of the Mothers is also present in the Times coverage. They are victims of the military regime. However, when the Times labels the *desaparecidos* as "leftists," "terrorists," and "subversives," the Mothers are also presented as victims of their deviant children which in turn, delegitimizes their struggle. On the other hand, sometimes they are portrayed as "vengeful" women. The leader—Hebe de Bonafini—does not escape the news-coverage fate of most female leaders: she is resented in Argentina and demonized in the Times coverage.

In sum, during the 20 years of the group's existence, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo were portrayed in The New York Times (a) as a curious group of women who are "mad" and who await word from the government about their missing relatives, (b) as the conscience of Argentina: a heroic human rights groups, the expert opinion that must be quoted in every human rights story, (c) as a vindictive group who opposes the democratic government, and (d) as a tourist attraction. All of these portrayals are consistent with the findings of previous research in the area of news coverage of women, highlighting the patriarchal ideological work performed by the news stories which simplifies women and their activities disdaining them as legitimate interlocutors of reality.

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APPENDIX:

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Context and the Developed World: Newspaper Coverage of Crisis in Scotland and Belgium

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Context and the Developed World: Newspaper Coverage of Crisis in Scotland and Belgium

Introduction

Over a period of months in 1996 the towns of Dunblane, Scotland and Charleroi, Belgium were in the international spotlight due to acts of extreme violence committed against children. In Scotland, Thomas Hamilton entered Dunblane Primary School and murdered 16 students (all aged 5 or 6) and one teacher. In Charleroi, Belgium, two young girls, both of whom had been sexually assaulted, were found in the cellar of a house belonging to Marc Dutroux; in the course of their investigation Belgian police also found the bodies of two eight-year-old girls buried in Dutroux's garden. Both of these events generated significant media coverage in both Europe and the United States.

While intensive British and Belgian coverage of domestic mass killings was understandable, detailed and continuing coverage in the United States (exemplified by the 34 articles provided by the New York Times) warrants further investigation for a number of reasons. First, the New York Times (NYT) coverage of the two events brings the issue of the geography, or "cultural proximity" of news journalism to the fore. Mass killings of children and adults take place on a daily basis throughout the world, so what made the Scottish and Belgian cases "special"? Second, over the past 30 years a large number of studies analyzing the quality of news coverage from developing ("Third World") regions have been produced, and such studies have indicated that events in developing nations are either ignored in the U.S. mass media, or when they are covered, are obscured due to factors such as "parachute journalism" and decontextualized reporting. While studies on the coverage of developing nations by Western news media have been rife, there is a paucity of work on how such coverage compares to coverage of similar events in developed regions, and if coverage of developed regions tends to utilize strategies such as using follow-up reports or contextualizing stories. Detailed and prolonged coverage of specific international events in regions such as Scotland and Belgium does generate questions about the performance of our more respected news sources.

The main research question for this study is: *Did the coverage of the Dunblane and Charleroi crimes by the New York Times fulfill the requirements for "good" journalism as set down by researchers of coverage of developing nations*? Follow-up research questions are as follows: (1) if the coverage did fulfill the requirements, how did it do so; and, (2) what are the implications of the quality of coverage from Scotland and Belgium for the debate over coverage of develop*ing* nations?

In order to address these issues, this work will be broken down into the following sections: a review of literature on relevant theory, previous studies of international news coverage, and journalistic routines; a discussion of methodology; a textual analysis of approximately 34 NYT articles with a focus on three particular areas: "story depth", "local sourcing", and "story development"; and, discussion/implication of the results.

Review of Literature

The purpose of the study at hand is to analyze the performance of the New York Times (NYT) in its coverage of child murders in both Scotland and Belgium. The performance of the newspaper in these stories is directly related to a number of theoretical and practical issues in journalism and mass communication. This work will address three specific areas: (1) how the NYT coverage of the crimes in Europe compares to coverage of similar "crisis" events in other areas of the world; (2) what are the broader implications of the NYT coverage; and, (3) how might journalistic "routines" and conceptions of "newsworthiness" have impacted/influenced the coverage analyzed"? This literature review will establish the groundwork necessary to answer these questions/issues. In order to do so, the following issues will be addressed: (1) issues of news "geography," story selection, and journalistic performance, particularly in regards to coverage of developing nations; (2) newsworthiness and journalistic routines in international news coverage; and, (3) journalistic performance "norms" (what constitutes "good" or "effective" coverage).

In relation to news geography, developing nations are either seriously underrepresented in the U.S. news media, or they are only represented when "crisis" events take place (Shoemaker, Danelian & Bredlinger, 1991; Fair, 1993; Larson, 1982; Larson, McAnany, & Storey, 1986; Harrison, 1986; Gans, 1979; Terrell, 1989). Fair illustrates this concept when she writes of coverage of Africa:

> Coverage of famines in the Horn of Africa demonstrates the value that crisis plays in determining news. Once famines were identified as newsworthy, refugee and aid sites became 'hot spots'...(p. 9)

Equally well documented is the fact that when developing nations *are* covered, the journalists who take part in the reporting do a poor job of providing background information or any type of social, political or economic context to the events being reported (Dahlgren & Chakrapani, 1982; Harrison, 1986; Fair, 1993; Terrell, 1989; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Dahlgren & Chakrapani (1982) sum up the problematic nature of U.S. news coverage of developing nations:

> Each narrative positions the violence in the foreground, while the social and political factors which it expresses recede to the background...While they are adequate to make some sense of the event, they do not help us to understand

> the social context giving rise to the events in the first place. Each story only further confirms the existence of social disorder in the Third World without adding any insight. (p. 51)

There is an underlying assumption in these studies of press performance that there is a "better" way to report from these countries. The performance of American journalists has been deemed to be insufficient by academics who suggest that the addition of context and background, as well as a movement away from a reliance upon elite sources for information would lead to improved reporting (Fair, 1993; Dahlgren & Chakrapani, 1982). Over 30 years ago Galtung & Ruge (1965) offered the following policy suggestions for media organizations engaged in foreign reporting:

> More emphasis on build-up and background material in the total media output. Journalists should be better trained to capture and report on long-term development, and concentrate less on 'events'...[M]ore awareness of the continuity factor - and at the same time more emphasis on follow-ups... (pp. 84-5)

These issues and proposals beg the question, however, of whether or not *domestic* coverage in the U.S. (or coverage of culturally proximate developed nations) is any different to coverage of developing nations in terms of its emphasis on crisis and avoidance of context or background.

There are a number of influences upon the content of media, but perhaps the most influential for news are those of journalistic routines and organizational/economic constraints. Many scholars have noted that coverage of developing nations tends to be inadequate, but do not address the issue of *why* that may be the case. Fair (1993), Herman & Chomsky (1988), and Windrich (1992), however, are all scholars who examined news content and *have* proposed some significant organizational, economic, or ideological reasons for such journalistic shortcomings.

Herman & Chomsky (1988) posited that there exist victims of violence who are either "worthy" or "unworthy" of coverage in the U.S. news media based upon the political/economic "value" of their exposure (a value rooted in status quo, conservative political ideals). Windrich (1992), on the other hand, looked at U.S. news coverage of Angola's Jonas Savimbi and found that a great deal of the poor coverage was as much the result of parachute journalism and simple naiveté as it was ideological bias. From a more practical standpoint, Fair (1993) noted that the increase the costs of keeping a correspondent abroad has prevented many news organizations from placing journalists in, for example, Africa, and that since most organizations do not consider Africa to be a viable area for newsworthy material, it is ignored. (p.8) Other constraints on effective journalism according to Fair include an over-reliance on government and/or elite sources of information due to an unwillingness (or inability) to leave major cities, and, for the same reason, an inability to examine more complex socio-political issues. (p.9)

Fair (1993) moves away from the specifics of African coverage to give a comprehensive definition of American journalism in the developing (and the developed) world:

> [T]he demand for corporate profit from news organizations, as well as the newsgathering routines of pack journalism, crisis orientation, parachute journalism, and capital city reportage, translate into a system of reporting where journalists, who sometimes know very little about the countries from which they are reporting, can indeed churn out a good deal of rather standardized news products...but like any story or narrative form, news stories are deeply rooted in the society from which they come. (p.9)

Other studies of routines and organizations have highlighted the tendency of U.S. journalists to take part in these types of practices (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978; Schudson, 1989; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), prompted in large part by accepted conceptions of "newsworthiness" and the economic constraints/demands inherent in corporate journalism.

Finally, the concept of journalistic performance "norms" is one which relates to many of the issues discussed in this section. The topic is one which is covered in detail by McQuail (1992). McQuail goes to great lengths to outline methods for analyzing some of the more difficult areas of media content such as objectivity, bias and balance. In his chapter on objectivity, McQuail described "completeness" in news reporting:

> It is usually thought to be a precondition of proper understanding of news, and the media generally promise completeness in the sense of a full range of information. (p. 210)

McQuail also addressed the notions of context and follow-ups, issues brought up by scholars such as Fair (1993) and Dahlgren & Chakrapani (1982) in their critiques of U.S.

media. He noted that there has been a certain amount of criticism aimed at journalists for not providing conclusions to long-running stories, although McQuail admits that the standards by which to evaluate completeness are difficult to determine (p. 210-11).

In conclusion, previous academic studies have indicated that most coverage of developing nations tends to be crisis-oriented, with little or no social, political or economic context provided; the coverage is therefore shallow, and essentially reinforces pre-existing views of developing nations as being backwards or unable to self-govern. The inadequate coverage is a result of news organizations' unwillingness to fund foreign correspondents, as well as journalistic routines of using official and elite sources for their information, searching for only "newsworthy" stories, and staying in urban areas. By implication, the coverage could be improved through the use of non-official sources, as well as the inclusion of context and detailed background information. Also, follow-up stories would help to eliminate the sense of "parachute journalism" present in current coverage.

The information obtained in this literature review will be used as a springboard for my analysis of the New York Times' coverage of the crimes in Scotland and Belgium. Questions of performance in those pieces will be addressed with specific reference to the information provided above, particularly the notions of "ideal" coverage (multi-sourced, non-urban, and contextualized).

Methodology & Data Source

Methodology

The method to be used in this study will be close textual analysis of 34 New York Times (NYT) articles. The justification for this methodology is that in order to fully understand the way in which the newspaper created depth and detail in its reporting, a word-by-word examination is necessary. Close textual analysis also allows the researcher to cite both short and lengthy sections of text to highlight a given point, and since this study is focusing on short passages of text *and* entire articles, some latitude is needed. Close textual analysis has proven to be an effective qualitative methodology for the examination of topics as diverse as newspaper coverage of the Mike Tyson rape case (Lule, 1995), coverage of the U.S. anti-drug crusade (Reeves & Campbell, 1994), and the framing of the Gulf War on local television newscasts (Reese & Buckalew, 1995).

Data Source

Thirty-four (34) NYT articles, taken off of the Lexis-Nexis service will be used in this study. The search words used to locate the Dunblane articles were: "Dunblane"; the search words used to locate the Belgian articles were: "Belgium", "child" (and derivatives thereof), "sex", and "murder". The search dates for both cases were from the date of the first story (the "breaking news") through November 10, 1996. All articles, with the exception of letters to the editor, were used in the study.

The NYT was selected as the data source for this study for one main reason: the NYT is generally considered to be the "paper of record" in the United States for international news coverage. Academics such as Rodriguez (1996) have also noted that the NYT is read by journalists from other news sources in order to gauge what is "important" international news. The NYT also has one of the largest numbers of foreign correspondents of any media organization in the United States.

Concepts and Definitions

Three areas will be examined in this study: "local sourcing", ""story depth" , and "story development." The definitions of these phrases are as follows:

1) "Local sourcing" is the use of local citizens, either official or non-official, as sources of information in any given article. The source must be defined as local in order to be coded as such.

2) "Story depth" refers to the volume (number of articles, length, etc.), background (personal history, regional history, etc.), and social/economic/political context (political environment, social unrest, on-going national debates, etc.) provided in the articles. Of the three criteria, volume is the *least* important in determining depth. The conditions for "depth" are necessarily broad, but will be justified (when appropriate) in the Results section.

3) "Story development" refers to how the two crimes are explicitly connected by the NYT to *other* domestic (in Britain or Belgium) or international events. "Story development" does *not* refer to coverage of the specific crime, but rather to how the crime is *linked* to other events.

Results

(Please note that all dates in the Results section refer to NYT articles from 1996).

Evidence of Local Sourcing: Scotland

The NYT coverage of the Dunblane school massacre contained information obtained from a number of local sources, most commonly police officials, local politicians, parents, and local citizens. This section will examine the use of those sources in the coverage of the Scottish massacre. While reviewing the results, it should be kept in mind that in times of crisis such as the aftermath of a mass killing, the police and other officials are the most profitable sources of information for journalists, since the number of dead and wounded, and the identity of the killer(s) and/or suspect(s) are pieces of information most likely to be at the disposal of official personnel. It could also be said, however, that the use of official sources (such as the police) lends an impersonal air to the piece, and does not generate the sense of "localism" that an interview with a regular citizen might.

The first nine articles on the Dunblane massacre were those that had the largest integration of official (predominantly local) and non-official (predominantly local citizens) sources. The article that broke the news of the killings (NYT, 3/14) contained a large number of local sources of information. The primary source in this first article was a local police officer, but also included in the piece were quotations from a rescue worker, a local town official, a local resident, the head of the Stirling Scout Association, British Prime Minister John Major, a local parent, a local teachers' group, and the pastor of Dunblane Cathedral. While most of information gathered from the "official" police sources were detail oriented (number of casualties, time of killings, etc.), the non-official sources provided "reaction" quotations such as, "It's been a horrible day...and it affects everyone here." (3/14)

After the initial story, there remained a strong local presence in the coverage of the massacre. The first seven follow-up articles to the initial breaking story (NYT, 3/15a, 3/15b, 3/16, 3/17, 3/18, 3/19, 3/23) contained quotations and information obtained from a wide variety of local citizens and officials. Among those interviewed (other than police officials) were local council members, gun store owners and Dunblane citizens (3/15b); rescue workers and Dunblane mothers (3/16); the editor of a British gun magazine (3/18);

and, Ron Taylor, the Headmaster of Dunblane Primary School and Margaret Finney, a school crossing guard (3/23).

As the coverage of the massacre moved into its second week, the focus of the stories moved away from Dunblane, and more towards Great Britain in general, and specifically the debates surrounding gun control (10/20, 10/17, 8/14), the safety of British schoolchildren (7/10), and violence in films (5/24, 4/14). Because of this shift towards coverage of issues of national import, the number of sources from Dunblane (and even Scotland) used in the stories became limited. The primary sources (post-March 23, 1996) were government officials, representatives of the British teachers' union, and gun-law critics.

Evidence of Local Sourcing: Belgium

Unlike that of the Dunblane massacre in Scotland, the NYT coverage of the Belgian sex-crimes was not initially focused on one particular town. While the murders and abuses took place in Charleroi, a significant amount of the coverage focused on Brussels, since that is where the majority of activity (public reactions, demonstrations, etc.) took place after the crimes were revealed. As with the Scottish coverage, however, there was a good balance between official and non-official local sources used, and the stories which emerged from Belgium highlighted "citizen reaction" to the crimes even *more* than did those from Dunblane.

Unlike the coverage of the Dunblane killings, where the prominence of local sources diminished through time, the Belgian stories tended to contain more "local" sources of information as the story developed. The first two articles on the Dutroux murders (8/22, 9/4) had police and local authorities as the primary sources of information; there were no interviews with local citizens or victims' relatives. From the third story through the eleventh, however, a large number of Belgian citizens, politicians, protesters, and union members were cited (10/21a, 10/21b, 10/19,10/15, 10/10, 9/26, 9/25, 9/9, 9/8). In order to generate a sense of local reaction in the local community after the discovery of the bodies, an 83 year-old railroad engineer, a local policeman, a classmate of one of the victims, a local mother and daughter, and a 22 year-old student were interviewed in the third article (9/8). Other local citizens (from Charleroi and Brussels) interviewed as the story developed were: a bookshop manager, an office worker, and a businesswoman (10/10); firefighters, a nurse, four policemen, and a house-painter (10/19); and, a mother/protest marcher in Brussels (10/21).

The local citizens who were interviewed for the articles above played much the same "narrative role" as those in the stories from Scotland: they provided the "local reaction" or "citizens response" angle, while police, local officials and legal analysts provided the majority of the substantive details of the case. A typical reaction from a Belgian citizen was as follows:

> 'I am here [at a rally in Brussels] to show solidarity with the parents,' said one marcher, Gerda Zammattio, the mother of a three-year-old daughter, Naomi. 'What has happened in the last few weeks has moved me greatly. The system must become more humane.' (10/21)

An exception to the loose rule that official sources provided the substantive details of the case came when Jeanine Lauwens, mother of the confessed killer Marc Dutroux, was quoted at length on the topic of her son's upbringing and early life (11/4).

Story Depth

As mentioned in the Method section, volume (number and length of articles) is not the determining factor in whether or not the coverage of a story has "depth." Having said this, volume should be seen as a *necessary* condition for depth, since providing details and context in a story requires significant space. With this in mind, a brief outline of the number of articles on, and related to, the Dunblane killings and the Belgian sex-crimes, together with article lengths will be given before any qualitative analysis of story depth.

A total of 21 pieces/articles on the Dunblane massacre were run in the NYT between March 14 and November 10, 1996; a total of 13 pieces/articles were run on the Belgian case between August 22 and November 4, 1996. The longest article (directly addressing the killings and/or aftermath) on the Scottish killings was 1084 words; the longest article (directly addressing the killings and/or aftermath) on the Belgian killings was 2259 words.

Evidence of Story Depth: Scotland

The NYT coverage of the Dunblane killings was marked by the depth of information provided on three particular topics: the killer, Thomas Hamilton, and his personal background; the environment in which the killings took place (the town of Dunblane); and, finally, the socio-political context in Great Britain both before and after the killings in regards to gun control.

The Killer: Thomas Hamilton

Starting with the first article published, the identity and background of murderer Thomas Hamilton was thoroughly examined. Throughout the 21 articles, the description of Hamilton rarely deviated from the first ones offered:

> The Scottish police identified the gunman as Thomas Hamilton, 43, a loner and avid gun enthusiast who lived in a housing project in nearby Stirling. (3/14)
>
> Mr. Hamilton, 43, a shambling loner whose obsession were guns, boys and photography, was well known to children and parents in this tiny community, even before he killed 16 small children...(3/15)

Hamilton, and his "obsession" with "guns and young boys" was a theme highlighted by the NYT. It was also noted in the first article that:

> In recent years, Mr. Hamilton led several local boys' clubs. In 1973 he was made a Boy Scout leader in Stirling, the Scout Association said. But in 1974 he was asked to resign 'following complaints about unstable and possibly improper behavior.' (3/14)

After these initial descriptions of Hamilton, the NYT began to focus on two areas of his past: the obsession with young boys, and his history with guns.

References to the sexual connection to Hamilton's crime ended only after ten articles. After the initial commentary that Hamilton's behavior had been considered by locals as being "improper," more evidence was supplied suggesting that the killer may have been something more than just a voyeur:

> ...regional council members said they had tried to get him removed from the boys' clubs that he ran, in which children complained that he was overly familiar, that he made them take their shirt off, and that he was obsessed with photographing them. (3/15)
>
> His [Hamilton's] problems began in 1974 when he was dismissed as Scout leader for taking eight boys on an outing and claiming they spent the night in a hostel when in fact they slept in a freezing van. (3/18)

References to Hamilton's use of, and obsession with, guns followed a similarly detailed pattern. The first article noted that Hamilton, "had been a member of several local gun clubs and appeared to have permits for some of his weapons." (3/14) In a follow-up, the NYT revealed that Hamilton actually had permits for all of the weapons he had owned, and pointed out that two of them were "semi-automatic." (3/17) Finally, Hamilton's full arsenal was revealed:

> ...[R]eports widely printed in British newspapers assert that his gun certificate authorized him to possess two .357 Magnums and two 9-millimeter semi-automatic pistols - all of which he reportedly used in his murderous rampage - along with two rifles, which he apparently did not own. (3/18)

The environment: Dunblane

While references to the environment in Dunblane were not as detailed as those of the personality and background of Thomas Hamilton, the NYT reporters clearly made a point of "framing" the Scottish town in a positive light. In the initial report of the killings, and in several follow-up articles, the town of Dunblane was described in evocative terms:

> A picturesque town of 7,000 people, many of them well-to-do commuters with jobs in Edinburgh or Glasgow, Dunblane is known as a place of friendly respectability and beautiful large houses, where people know their neighbors and even burglary is seen as a exotic urban practice. (3/15)

The town was also portrayed as a near collective, whose citizens banded together during a time of crisis:

> Today, many stores on the High Street, the social center of this cathedral town, were closed. Some had signs out front, expressing sympathy for the families of the children. (3/15)
>
> But here, after three days of being besieged by reporters from around the world, the weary residents of Dunblane and Stirling were preparing for a non-denominational vigil at the Dunblane Cathedral and said they were ready to be left alone. (3/16)

Socio-Political context: gun control in Britain

Within its coverage of the massacre, the NYT did a thorough job of retelling the recent history of British gun-control legislation and debate. The first article, which was rich in detail and context, immediately addressed the issue of gun-control in Britain:

> The attack focused immediate attention on handgun legislation and school security in a country where most police officers do not even carry guns... (3/14)
>
> [T]oday's incident stirred immediate memories of a similar one in Berkshire,

> England, in which a gunman in Hungerford used an arsenal of weapons to kill 14 people before killing himself. That incident, in 1987, led to a law banning the use of automatic weapons and requiring permits for any guns taken off the premises of authorized gun clubs. (3/14)

The gun-control angle was present in a majority of the articles on the Dunblane killings, and further information provided on the topic included the following: a brief description of the requirements for obtaining a gun permit in Britain (3/15); an announcement that Prime Minister Major had appointed a Scottish judge to investigate how Hamilton had obtained his licenses (3/16); that Hamilton had actually "met Britain's tight legal requirements for gun ownership" (3/17); a detailed description of the presence of legal and illegal firearms in Britain, and a further breakdown of the requirements for obtaining a gun permit (3/18); and, three articles following a movement in the British Parliament to implement an outright ban on the ownership of handguns (8/14, 10/17, 10/20).

Evidence of Story Depth: Belgium

Up to November of 1996, the NYT ran eight fewer stories on the Belgian murders than those on the Scottish, and so a slight discrepancy between the two in terms of "depth" might have been expected. The coverage of the crime, however, proved to be quite detailed, but unlike the coverage from Scotland, the NYT focused (in "depth") on only two areas of the case: the background of the killer, Marc Dutroux; and, public reaction in Belgium to the murders (and the police handling of the investigation).

The Killer: Marc Dutroux

As with the Dunblane killings, the Charleroi murderer was known to the NYT as soon as the story broke. Details on Marc Dutroux were readily available to the press, primarily because he had a criminal record and had confessed to the crimes. The information provided in the first article was repeated on a regular basis throughout the other articles:

> Marc Dutroux, 39, an unemployed electrician in Belgium who was previously convicted of abusing children, has followed the pattern to the letter, and now he is back in police custody after having confessed to another series of crimes...Dutroux was sentenced in 1989 to 13 years in prison on multiple counts of rape and child abuse. But he was released after three years for good behavior...(8/22)

Follow-up articles elaborated on Dutroux's crimes, indicating that he had also murdered a criminal associate (9/4), was involved in an international child pornography ring (9/25), had kidnapped several children (10/10), and was involved in car theft and drug trafficking (10/10, 11/4). A lengthy article containing an interview with Dutroux's mother was published (11/4) which shed some light upon his background, although the mother had lost contact with her son some years earlier.

Public reaction to the murders

According to reports in the NYT, public reaction to the child murders in Belgium was extremely strong, and the newspaper highlighted that "angle" accordingly. While the initial articles on the killings focused on general public outrage, later pieces began to illuminate a more deep-rooted hostility many Belgians felt towards their political, legal, and criminal systems (a hostility triggered in large part by the Charleroi killings).

The reaction to the murders in Belgium, as reported in the NYT, came in two particular forms: the general outrage after the killings, and then the more organized protests against both Dutroux and the Belgian authorities. The general outrage followed a somewhat regular pattern:

> The fate of the six girls has engendered a sense of national mourning in Belgium, with television images from across the country today showing cars driving around with black ribbons and demonstrators carrying signs saying, 'To death.' (8/22)
>
> In Brussels, an easy-living capital, the mood is dark and brooding. 'It's like a collective depression,' said Andre de Wael, an office worker, boarding a train to take a break in Paris, 'it's as if all our anxieties, as if all things in the country, have become mixed up in these murders.' (10/10)

As suggested in the final quotation, and as indicated in later articles, much of the anger and confusion over the killings in Belgium was rooted in the fact that the country was considered to a peaceful nation, immune from the type of crimes committed by Dutroux (9/25, 10/10, 10/19, 10/21).

Reports on the more organized reactions to the murders came a number of weeks after the killings were discovered, and especially after the chief judge investigating the crimes, Jean-Marc Connerotte, was dismissed from the case for attending a fund-raising dinner for families of the missing children. (10/14) It was reported that Connerotte had become a national hero in Belgium, and that the dismissal had provoked serious national reactions:

> An issue that has already inspired nationwide anger and protest exploded, with wildcat strikes and sit-ins and barricades on roads and train tracks... Many say they believe press reports that the judge...was about to disclose the names of senior officials who had been recognized on sex videotapes confiscated in the case. (10/19)

The reports of public disturbances culminated with two stories on a public protest march in Brussels attended by nearly 275,000 Belgians (10/20, 10/21). The NYT framed the demonstration in the following way:

> The march had been planned before Mr. Connerotte's dismissal last week, and gained momentum in the days following, which were marked by spontaneous protests around the country aimed increasingly at the nation's entire political and judicial class. (10/21)

In a rather morose editorial, the NYT summed up its response to public reactions to the killings (and the political scandals surrounding them):

> These events would be business as usual in many nations, but until now, Belgium did not consider itself one of them...The idea of lost European innocence is touching but mythical...In the 20th century, moreover, more people have died in the massacres, genocides and pogroms of supposedly civilized Europe than on any other continent. (10/21)

Story Development

In this final section I will briefly detail the "development" of the two stories under analysis, that is, I will examine how follow-up articles (after the initial, breaking story) related the crimes to other domestic (Belgian/British) and foreign issues. This results section is not as "text-oriented" as the previous two, but is intended to illustrate the lengths to which the NYT contextualized the stories (and in so doing added to "story depth"), with "context" in this case relating to how the stories fit in to other socio-political debates/issues around the world.

Story Development: Scotland

As mentioned in the section on "story depth," much of the post-crime coverage of the Dunblane killings by the NYT focused on the gun control debate in Britain. Stories following this theme were relatively spread out over the 8 month period. Some articles merely used the Dunblane killings as a springboard into a detailed description of British gun control laws. (10/20, 10/17, 8/14) In a number of these stories, comparisons were made between gun usage in the United States and Great Britain. While stories on or about gun control were predominant (and clearly the main thread that ran through the articles over time), there were a number of articles on other topics that cited the incident in Dunblane, or used the killings as a point of comparison. Alternative topics to the gun control debate in the NYT included the following: a similar crime in the United States (4/14); the attempted censoring by British authorities of an incoming American film (5/24, 4/14); an attack at a second school in Britain (7/10); and, two articles on the arts (9/12, 11/10).

In April, 1996, the NYT reported on a murder-suicide case in Eastchester, New York. According to the paper, the killer bore a striking psychological resemblance to the killer from Dunblane, Thomas Hamilton. The reporter noted that both incidents have stimulated debate on gun control measures, as well as the question of, "how one tells the difference between a neighbor who is somewhat strange and one who is capable of murder." (4/14) An attack by a machete-wielding man on a nursery school in Wolverhampton, England that left three students injured was also framed within the context of the Dunblane killings (7/10), as were moves by members of the British Parliament to have the video distribution of the uncut version of the American film "Natural Born Killers" halted (5/24, 4/14). Finally, two articles, one on photography (9/12) and one on the opening of a new play in New Jersey (10/10) had references to the Dunblane massacre. In an article covering an annual meeting of photojournalists in France, the organizer, Jean-Francois Leroy, made a relevant connection between the killings in Dunblane and those in other regions of the world:

> He [Leroy] said photographers were still willing to work in distant regions of the developing world or among the ailing or dispossessed in advanced societies, but many of their reports were not getting published. 'We talk about the poor kids murdered by a monster in Dunblane, Scotland because they could be our kids,' Mr. Leroy said, 'but we don't care about the kids in Bosnia.' (9/12)

Story Development: Belgium

The NYT articles covering the Belgian crimes had one overarching theme other than details of the crime/criminal: social unrest. Of the 13 articles published by the newspaper, seven dealt directly or indirectly with some type of social unrest, demonstration or public gathering. All of those articles had the Dutroux murders as the central focus. As mentioned previously, many of the articles addressed public dissatisfaction with the political and legal system in Belgium. Many of those pieces, in turn, dealt with a protest march in Brussels attended by upwards of 275,000 Belgians (11/4, 10/20, 10/21).

In addition to the stories of social unrest, the NYT reported on a number of other issues linked the Dutroux killings: the murder of a the Belgian Socialist Party leader in 1991 (10/21, 10/19, 10/10, 9/9); a discussion of child exploitation at the United Nations (9/25); and, the murder of a child in Germany (9/26). Of the topics, coverage of the murder of the Socialist Party leader proved to be the most detailed and illuminating. The NYT revealed that Alain Van Der Biest had been arrested on September 9, 1996 for the murder of Andre Cools. The link to the Dutroux murders, according to the paper, lay in the fact that, "the prosecutors in the child-sex probe had previously investigated the Cools murder." (9/9). Fuel was added to the Belgian protesters' fire when it was revealed that the magistrate in the Dutroux case, Jean Connerotte, was fired; the NYT reported that the chief magistrate in the Cools murder had resigned when he was suspected of covering up information. According to the NYT, the combination of the two events led to the mass distrust in the Belgian legal system, and a belief that a culture of lies was operating with the corridors of power in Brussels. (10/21, 10/20, 10/19).

Discussion/Implications/Conclusions

Coverage of Scotland & Belgium: Conforming to the "Academic Ideal"?

Sourcing

Many academics cited in the literature review considered the use of local, non-elite sources to be part of the solution to the problem of unbalanced or poor news reporting from developing nations. This leads to the question(s) of whether or not the NYT did an adequate job of: (1) finding local sources, and (2) finding local sources who were "non-elite," and if the use of those sources added to the coverage of these develop*ed* nations any substantial way.

For the most part, the NYT did a credible job of integrating its local elite and non-elite sources. As noted in the results, the majority of "hard" information (suspect name, background information, criminal history, number of casualties) came from official sources. While a large number of "regular" Scottish and Belgian citizens were interviewed or quoted in the 34 articles, their comments tended to be of the "reaction," "grief-stricken," or "outraged" nature. This is hardly surprising, however, since one would not expect regular citizens to have access to "hard" information (unless, of course, they were eye-witnesses or knew the killer).

The use of "regular," non-elite sources, however, did dramatically change the tone of the articles. By giving Scots and Belgians column inches in which to voice their opinions, a sense of localism, community, and humanity was generated in the articles. By supplying an outlet for what was essentially public opinion on the murders, the NYT provided readers with a social context to the *aftermath* of the killings. Rather than simply reporting on the murders and ignoring citizen reaction (as is the case in many other foreign crime stories), the NYT writers "used" (either wittingly or unwittingly) public reaction and outrage to create an image of two countries whose citizens do not accept violent crime as an everyday occurrence, and have cultures that are firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian values.

Background, Context, & Follow-Ups

The issues of background, context, and follow-ups are directly related to "story depth" and "story development." Again, many scholars noted that, as a result of various journalistic constraints (usually economic) and routines (often culturally biased), coverage of developing nations tended to ignore the social, political and economic contexts within which events took place. The result, it was argued, was fragmented and essentially worthless information that had little or no relation to the "real story." Decontextualization also led to developing nations being seen as "typically backward" or "fundamentally flawed." The issue here, therefore, is whether or not the NYT satisfied the various conditions for contextualization, and, if so, how it affected the image of the two *developed* nations.

To begin, the stories from Scotland and Belgium were written with a significant amount of depth. In both cases the killer was identified immediately, and information on his background was given in detail. Hamilton's association with guns and young boys was expanded upon, as was Dutroux's obsession with kidnapping and pornography. Issues from within the socio-political spheres of Britain and Belgium were also addressed: in the case of Britain it was handgun control, and in Belgium, political and legal corruption. Finally, the town of Dunblane was described in rather evocative detail creating an image of a quaint, peaceful town destroyed by a horrific act of violence.

Associated with the idea of "story depth" was that of "story development." Both of the storylines analyzed contained a large number of "connected" or "related" stories. These connected or related issues (such as the second school attack in Britain and the Andre Cools murder in Belgium) added further depth to the existing stories by placing them in a broader context. By the NYT connecting the Dunblane killings to the murders in Eastchester, New York, for example, the Scottish killings could be seen in a more "global" perspective, as were related issues such as gun control and child safety. In the same way, the connection made between the Charleroi killings and a murder in Germany generated a cross-national context for the Belgian crime.

It appears that the NYT did satisfy many of the requirements for creating context (other than simply *having* follow-up articles). The depth and development of the Scottish and Belgian stories placed the two events in a broader context, and suggested to the reader that the murders and kidnappings did not take place in social, political, or economic vacuums. The reports on the demonstrations in Brussels were particularly valuable in painting a picture of Belgian society, and indicated the depths to which the Belgian citizenry distrusted elites in their country. Clearly, without a given context, crimes will appear to be random and, to a certain extent, typical. The nations of Britain and Belgium, due to the background and context provided, were portrayed as *essentially* peaceful and compassionate lands, but not without their problems.

"Crisis Coverage" or Legitimate Social Issues?

What distinguishes *legitimate* coverage of a crisis situation from what has become known as "crisis coverage" (in the negative sense) has rarely been elaborated upon. I would posit that while stories such as those from Dunblane and Belgium *are* "crisis" stories, they have been transformed into legitimacy (in an academic rather than professional sense) through detailed sourcing, depth, and development.

Coverage of an earthquake, plane crash or mass murder without appropriate background and contextual information leads to the classic "crisis coverage" outlined by a number of scholars (Larson, 1982; Fair, 1993; Harrison 1986). The question to be addressed, however, is whether or not the *majority* of news coverage (both domestic and international) is not crisis-oriented, and if so, what distinguishes the good crisis coverage from the bad?

What essentially transformed the Scottish and Belgian stories from mere tales of blood-and-mayhem to legitimacy was the connection of the crimes to broader social and political issues. While the murders may have been the genesis for the 34 stories, the fact remains that the majority of the articles dealt with *other* issues such as social upheaval and gun control, which, while *related* to the crimes, freed the journalists from merely giving body-counts and injury reports. Much of the criticism of classic "crisis coverage" centers around the fact that it is not linked to any domestic or international social issues. The coverage from Scotland and Belgium shows how crisis events can be linked to social issues in concrete ways.

Implications for the "Developed vs. Developing" Debate

Perhaps more than anything else, the results of this study can only add fuel to the fire of those who criticize American news coverage of developing nations. A secondary consideration is that while thousands of child murders, many more gruesome than those in

Scotland and Belgium, go unreported, the killings in Dunblane and Charleroi were front-page material for months. Fair (1993) and Herman & Chomsky (1988) are perhaps correct, therefore, when they assert that only those countries culturally "proximate" to the United States are deemed "worthy" of such coverage.

The answer to both issues could lie in the simple economics of American international journalism: newspapers are simply unwilling to pay for costly correspondents in developing nations. The New York Times had correspondents in London and Paris, and so when the killings took place in Dunblane and Charleroi, there was no *economic* reason not to send them there; and, in actual fact, the stories were extremely "newsworthy" to begin with: two small regions of Europe, usually unaccustomed to extreme violence, experience horrific acts against children. On top of this, one of the stories took place in a country where English was the native language.

While the above arguments defending the NYT against accusations of geographical bias are substantial, the fact remains that the newspaper decided to run detailed stories on the two crimes, when it had chosen *not* to do so on hundreds, if not thousands, of other occasions when similar crimes occurred (an example being the massacre of street children in Rio de Janeiro). Also, the two stories it did decide to run (in detail) both originated in Western Europe, suggesting that the NYT considered that region to be more worthy of such in-depth coverage than other areas of the world. The 34 articles by the NYT on the two crimes are not *radical* departures from journalistic procedure, but their depth, sourcing, and development are relatively abnormal, and as such generate questions with regards to the editorial reasoning behind the decision to run them. The detailed coverage of the Dunblane and Charleroi killings, when juxtaposed to previous (relatively thin) coverage of violent events in developing nations, leads one to believe that cultural bias and cultural proximity are as important, if not *more* important, factors than economic constraints.

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Newsrooms Under Siege: Crime Coverage, Public Policy and the Louisiana Pizza Kitchen Murders

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Newsrooms Under Siege: Crime Coverage, Public Policy and the Louisiana Pizza Kitchen Murders

At about 10 a.m. on Sunday, December 1, 1996, three employees of a restaurant in the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter were shot to death during a robbery. Stories related to the Louisiana Pizza Kitchen murders dominated the front page of The Times-Picayune as well as coverage on the city's four local television newscasts for several days to follow. The initial stories offered details of the execution-style shootings. They were followed by reports that a fourth victim had survived and was able to identify one of the men who was to become a prime suspect in the investigation. TV newscasts and the newspaper's front page were filled with images of the victims' mourning friends and family members. By December 3, police had arrested three men, and within 48-hours of the murders the New Orleans news audience knew the names of the victims and that three suspects were behind bars.

Over the next several days, the New Orleans news media continued to carry extensive coverage of the murders, much of it focusing on complaints from French Quarter residents and business owners about New Orleans' crime problem. A march to City Hall led by the Quarter occupants received considerable media attention. Their demand for increased police funding became the dominant theme of coverage by The Times-Picayune and in local TV news reports. The coverage especially focused on the City Council's decision the week before to reject an appeal from

Police Chief Richard Pennington to provide the police with an additional $4 million for his 1997 budget. French Quarter protest leaders demanded that the council and Mayor Marc Morial meet the police chief's request.

Coverage of the Louisiana Pizza Kitchen murders was handled as it is routinely by news organizations. It was a gruesome murder in the French Quarter, New Orleans' most popular neighborhood and the hub of the city's huge tourist industry. The story commanded the attention of journalists who knew that such a sensational murder would be of interest to huge audiences. That the story would receive such attention is not remarkable; the news business has for years handled sensational violent crimes as major events. However, "follow-up" coverage repeatedly framed the murders in the context of a need for increased police funding, a narrative that limited the discussion of the city's crime problem to a simplistic solution that ignored the more significant and complex issues that affect crime.

The focus of this paper is how the news media linked the Pizza Kitchen murders to the police chief's request for $4 million dollars. It was a connection played up in a rare front-page editorial in The Times-Picayune and in the expanded news coverage provided by local TV stations. The theme of the coverage -- that the city council should reconsider and approve a $4 million increase in the police budget to help the city end its crime problem -- was repeated in story after story in the newspaper and on the local TV news. The occasional references to other factors that affect the city's crime problems were either completely ignored or absorbed into this dominant theme.

It is unlikely that the $4 million budget increase (which the City Council would eventually approve) would have a significant impact on New Orleans' crime problem. The city's murders are largely confined to housing developments and connected to the sale of illegal drugs. News reports noted that the $4 million was intended for police raises, and it would take a serious leap of logic to believe that pay raises could significantly affect the city's substantial murder rate. But the coverage that followed the Pizza Kitchen murders -- including opinion pieces by Times-Picayune columnists and editorial writers and one TV station's general manager -- was governed by constant references to the need for the City Council to approve the police chief's request for the money. Council members had little choice but to support the budget increase and would do so a week after the Pizza Kitchen murders.

In the days to follow, the murders and the budget decision were no longer in the news. The city's daily journalists moved on to other murders and other political issues. The approach to the coverage was predictable; journalists routinely cover sensational murders and controversial decisions by public officials. It is the routineness of the approach that concerns me. By ignoring the more complex issues that are at the root of urban crime problems, news organizations contribute to a political atmosphere in which factors that have a direct impact on criminal activity -- economic inequities, educational neglect, drug abuse, racial discrimination and political posturing -- are ignored. If these realities are ignored, then actually solving the crime problem will not be possible; with the media focusing attention on simplistic solutions, the need for public officials to deal with the more difficult problems becomes impractical for those politicians who expect to be re-elected.

My concern is that instead of playing the role of democracy's watchdog, the news media are diverting the public's attention away from vital issues that affect the quality of life in American cities. The coverage of the Pizza Kitchen murders provides an excellent microcosm of how newsroom routines influence ineffective public policy. In this paper I will examine coverage that followed the murders in The Times-Picayune and on WWL-TV (New Orleans' CBS affiliate), the station with the most-watched newscasts in the city. This textual analysis attempts to show how journalistic conventions framed the murders in a narrow political context that profoundly influenced a specific public policy decision.

Stories repeatedly referred to New Orleans as a city "under siege" by crime. I argue here that it is not the city but its newsrooms that are under siege, engulfed in conventions that dictate a tunnel-vision on how crime is perceived and how the city should address the problem. I also argue that this is not an isolated case, but that news coverage routinely has a significant impact on public policy decisions related to crime, like "three strikes" criminal legislation and other "tough-on-crime" mandates supported by even the most liberal candidates for public office.

History, Common Sense and the Conventions of Journalism

Almost 60 years ago, sociologist Robert Park argued that news reports carry a falsely scientific air, and that they ignore the relationships between cultural determinants and the events themselves:

> News is not history because, for one thing-among others, it deals, on the whole, with isolated events and does not seek to relate them to one another either in the form of causal or in the form of teleological sequences.... A reporter, as distinguished from a historian, seeks merely to record each single event as it occurs and is concerned with the past and future only in so far as these throw light on what is actual and present. (1940, p. 675)

In the coverage of the Pizza Kitchen murders, New Orleans' journalists focused on two "single events" -- the murders and the police chief's request for $4 million -- as if they existed in some sort of journalistic vacuum. The city claims one of the country's highest murder rates (more than 300 a year) and each murder tends to be covered in the context of a single crime. Some news organizations have included the city's murder-count in graphics that accompany stories, but there is rarely an attempt to view the problem in the context of larger societal issues. The less "sensational" stories that account for the large majority of the city's murders -- drug-related shootings in housing developments -- are carried on The Times-Picayune's back pages and are generally ignored on local TV newscasts. When violent crime spills over into middle-class neighborhoods in Uptown New Orleans, the French Quarter or suburban Metairie, the murders become front-page events and top the evening news. Rarely is a connection made between the crime problem that engulfs the city's poorest neighborhoods and the violent crimes that occasionally affect middle-class New Orleans. And even less coverage is offered that explains the social and economic roots of the city's criminal activity.

Daily news organizations offer little explanation of the effects of an economic system that virtually excludes members of the underclass. Business journalism -- as seen in the "Money" sections of daily newspapers or in brief reports on local TV newscasts -- is entirely devoted to the successes and failures of corporate and entrepreneurial activities, investment prospects and middle-class tax issues. Also ignored are the effects of a horrible public education system. Coverage of the New Orleans Public Schools -- one of the country's poorest and least effective -- is limited to crimes that take place on school or grounds or annual stories about poor test scores. Occasionally, a news organization will provide a "success story" on one school or program that is somehow managing to effectively educate students.

The failure of the New Orleans's news organizations to cover the root causes of the city's crime problem (economic and educational factors are just two of many) is hardly unique. While some of America's "elite" newspapers still include significant explanatory stories and series that go beyond the kind of history-less, single-event coverage that dominates daily journalism, most news organizations simply rely on tried routines and conventions without much apparent thought to the cultural and political weight their coverage carries.

This approach is not likely to change; a powerful "common sense" dictates newsroom practices, and journalists are smug in the defense of the work they do. David Brinkley's oft-quoted definition of news is typical of that smugness: "News is what I say it is." Newsroom work is completed out of habit and on rigid deadlines; routines are rarely questioned, and until some economic incentive to change the routines becomes apparent, things won't.[1] Explanations of issues that affect public policy are not likely to show up any time soon in the daily news accounts consumed by American audiences.

America's economic system and its relationship to crime and poverty is perhaps the most significant of the cultural issues that newsrooms overlook or ignore. Crimes are covered on a day-to-day basis, and the news routine calls for interviews with police and, occasionally, witnesses and family members. The stories are told without a sense of history, without reference to larger social and economic problems that have created in America an underground economic system that profoundly affects criminal behavior. By stripping the stories of history and social implications, the coverage repeatedly implies a problem with the value system of the impoverished members of the underclass (who are actually the most common victims of violent crime).

Sociologist William Julius Wilson (1996) has provided a compelling argument that describes the relationship between America's economic system and criminal behavior in our country's poorest neighborhood. He explains that young people from these communities have

> limited prospects for stable or attractive employment [and] are easily lured into drug trafficking and therefore increasingly find themselves involved in the violent behavior that accompanies it. (p. 22)

Herman Gray (1991) argues that the dominant media representation of poor people -- especially poor people of color -- displaces

> representations that would enable viewers to see that many individuals trapped in the under class have the very same qualities [of hard work, determination and sacrifice, qualities that tend to be associated in media representations with members of the middle class] but lack the options and opportunities to realize them. (p. 303)

It is easy to predict that New Orleans' crime problem is not going to go away soon. Current American public policy, including the recent dismantling of the welfare system, hardly calls for the kinds of programs that might affect realistic changes. Job training programs, improved public education and the creation of new employment possibilities continue to receive only lip service from public officials who fear a backlash from middle-class voters who do not recognize the needs for such programs. As Wilson explains,

> Americans in the larger society often conclude, as reflected in the media reports, that the frequency with which behavior in the inner-city ghetto departs from mainstream normative expectations is the result of a different value system.... Little effort is made in these reports to explore the fact that people experience great difficulty as they try to conform to the basic values of the larger society in the face of restrictions unknown to middle-class whites and blacks alike....
>
> The society's lack of understanding of the problems that plague inner-city ghetto residents has implications for the state of urban race relations and the degree of support for race-based social policy. (p. 181-182)

Certainly, the media must take some of the responsibility for mainstream America's misconception of its crime problem. A number of critics of contemporary journalism have identified the problematic nature of news conventions. The critique often focuses on the role of the media in a democratic society to provide citizens with the information they need to make wise political decisions.[2] It is unlikely that we will see any dramatic change in news coverage anytime soon. Most journalists are satisfied and do not question the routine of the work they do, and news executives have little financial reason to change their approach, especially the profit-driven managers of local television news stations who hire "news consultants" to advise them not on improving the quality of journalism but on increasing advertising revenue by attracting larger audiences.

The analysis that follows offers further evidence that current journalistic practices fail to provide audiences with the kind of informed perspective that might actually affect substantial political change; instead, the coverage offers only a simplistic (and misleading) understanding of the political and cultural events that surrounded the Louisiana Pizza Kitchen murders.

Talk Back: The Times-Picayune and Public Opinion

The Times-Picayune's initial coverage of the Pizza Kitchen murders was quite standard. The headline on the top of page one December 2 read, "Pizza Kitchen murders shock French Quarter." The story began,

> Shortly after arriving for work Sunday morning, a waitress at a French Quarter restaurant opened a deep freeze and found three of her co-workers fatally shot in the head. A fourth was shot in the back and reported in serious condition.
>
> The slayings, thought to have been committed during a robbery at the Louisiana Pizza Kitchen, capped one of the bloodiest weeks in the city this year and left the community in shock.

As the story continues, it cites police sources as it describes the tragic events. It quotes customers of the restaurant and other French Quarter business owners to capture the collective outrage of the neighborhood. The story's fourteenth paragraph makes the first connection between the shooting and the City Council's decision the week before not to approve a police budget increase:

> Other French Quarter residents tempered their shock and anger with the hope that the latest tragedy will spur Mayor Morial and the City Council to forge an agreement on extra allocations for the police.

The story ends by summarizing ten murders that had occurred during the previous week.

The second-day coverage of the Pizza Kitchen murders included identification of the victims and the suspects in the case. That page one story was accompanied by a sidebar, headlined "Citizens, merchants demand a safer city," that again referred to the need for increased police spending. The newspaper invited readers to call, e-mail or fax comments on "the decision by Mayor Marc Morial and the City Council to deny Police Chief Richard Pennington his request" for increased funding.

On December 4, the newspaper carried on a full page in its opinion section the comments of readers who had responded to its appeal. Titled "Talk Back," the newspaper's introduction to the responses noted that "the overwhelming sentiment of readers was to give Pennington the money, and most said it should be found in the existing budget." Indeed, all 39 respondents who were quoted recommended that the city increase the police budget. Their comments included suggestions on where the money should come from (increased property taxes, less spending in other areas) as well as their concerns about the crime problem. Said one,

> Shame on you Mayor Morial and City Council majority. When I open my Sunday paper and see a beautiful young woman senselessly murdered and think that you can sleep at night after turning down a request small in comparison to the total budget, all I can say is, "shame on you."

Another replied,

> I think the actions of the mayor and the majority of the City Council... were the height of irresponsibility. As a result of crime the city

> is facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions, and the only way to address it is to increase the Police Department's budget.... Other city expenditures must be cut.

Only one of the respondents hinted that the crime problem might be symptomatic of larger problems, noting

> we live in a city where the education system is poor -- horrendous even, in some instances -- and the crime situation is terrible. We're just going to have to pay for better living conditions in this city that we all love.

The following day, The Times-Picayune carried a rare front-page editorial under a banner headline reading, "Under siege by crime, a community says 'Enough!'" It begins,

> What does it take to stir a community's leaders to action?
>
> What does it take for New Orleans leaders to put aside petty politics and past grudges to fight the cancer that is crime?
>
> How much longer can we tolerate the daily parade of murdered young men and women through the obituary pages of this newspaper, leaving behind a trail of bereaved loved ones?

The article cites the response of readers to its request for their comments, noting that the paper received 400 calls, faxes and e-mails: "The overwhelming consensus: confidence in the chief, annoyance with the politicians, impatience to start solving the problem." The editorial concludes by urging the mayor and City Council to approve the $4 million increase in the police budget:

> We think New Orleans has had enough of crime and, judging by our pages, the people do too.
>
> Their collective cry must finally be piercing even the thick walls of that bunker called City Hall.
>
> It must be heeded.

The Times-Picayune that day also carried articles by political writers Iris Kelso and James Gill in the op-ed section. Neither piece added much more to the debate, and both argued that the Pizza Kitchen murders provided evidence that the city needed to provide funding for police raises. Kelso's article, headlined "Mayor, council 'playing with lives'," argued,

> This beautiful city is not going to be fit to live in if we don't get a handle on crime. This is no time for the mayor and the council to be timid about asking for more money to put the police chief's blueprint into action.

Gill's opinion (headlined simply, "Find the money") argues, "We finally have a police chief who appears to know what he is doing, and City Hall turns obstructionist."

Over the next few days, the newspaper covered other stories that referred to the Pizza Kitchen murders. It also covered the

City Council's December 6 decision to approve the increase in the police budget. The paper's editors must have felt a sense of triumph, having won their campaign to get the city to reconsider its allocation of police funding. This would be the "preferred reading," as Stuart Hall (1980) would describe it, of The Times-Picayune coverage of the murders and the subsequent budget discussion. This reading of the coverage would have us believe that journalists had triumphed over inept public officials and -- in the true spirit of a free press -- had afflicted the comfortable and comforted the afflicted. But not all of us would "read" the coverage that way. Residents of the city's most crime-ridden neighborhoods certainly wonder why crimes in their neighborhoods do not command similar media attention and public reaction. What Hall would call a "negotiated" or "oppositional" reading of the coverage would provide a completely different interpretation.

It is not difficult to see how the newspaper's editors manipulated "public opinion" to bolster their own perception of the city's crime problem. Local news organizations bombard audiences with shallow daily coverage of violent crime and rarely provide any kind of history or social context that might frame the events in a more complex and politically intelligent manner. Given the kind of coverage of crime that journalists provide, it was entirely predictable that, when asked to voice their opinion, 400 readers would call and respond that the police chief should be given his $4 million. As Walter Lippmann (1922) pointed out in *Public Opinion*, audiences respond not to reality, but to "the pictures in their heads," pictures provided by the news media. The city's daily news organizations had provided a "picture" that limited audiences to only one possible reaction to the Pizza Kitchen murders: Give the police chief his money. What the coverage does not tell audiences is that it is highly unlikely that the money would have a significant impact on the city's crime problem.

By ignoring the more complex social and political issues that affect crime, news organizations are helping to create circumstances in which real solutions will not be possible. Even America's most liberal politicians -- at least those who want to get elected -- have to campaign with "tough-on-crime" rhetoric, supporting the construction of new jails, "three strikes" criminal legislation, the death penalty, larger and tougher police forces. Given the routine approach to crime coverage by our daily journalists, politicians who need public support have no choice but to address the issue in the same narrow context provided by news organizations. Rather than looking at crime as the symptom of larger societal problems (capitalism running rampant, classism, racism), crime is perceived as a problem without roots. *The Times-Picayune*'s front-page editorial urged the city's leaders to "fight the cancer that is crime." The city's crime problem is a *symptom* of a larger cancer; it will not be solved until it is addressed as a *symptom* instead of a separate disease with no underlying causes.

I found only one reference to this possibility in the newspaper's coverage in the two weeks following the Pizza Kitchen murders. The newspaper's only African-American columnist, Lolis Elie, wrote on December 4,

> It seems to me that poverty, unemployment and poor education are among the underlying factors fueling our crime wave. . .
>
> What we need is to study ways of reducing the causes of criminal behavior. . .
>
> Unfortunately, discussion of such programs isn't stylish. Politicians tremble at the thought of being labeled soft on crime. Rather than advance intelligent strategies for dealing with the problem, they often hide behind a mindless, lock-'em-up philosophy that is all the rage.

Elie does not make a connection between his newspaper's coverage of crime and the decisions made by public officials. And his is a lone voice among the newspaper's opinion writers. The newspaper would do well do consider his perception and to begin to investigate and explain, as the headline above his column reads, why there is "No easy fix for violence."

The Siege Continues: WWL-TV Expands its Coverage

Like The Times-Picayune's initial coverage of the Pizza Kitchen murders, WWL-TV's first- and second-day stories focused on the crime itself and the reactions of the victims' families and friends. Those stories included interviews with French

Quarter business owners who complained about the crime problem and the need for improved policing. Following the lead of the morning newspaper, on December 5 the station's coverage focused on the apparently increasing outrage of the French Quarter occupants. The lead stories on the 6 and 10 p.m. newscasts that day focused on a special meeting of the City Council at which citizens could address council members about the crime problem. The stories included numerous soundbites of citizens outraged by the murders calling for the council to increase the police superintendent's budget. As one said, "Whatever he asks for, let him have it." Reporter Joel Thomas summarized the day's events in his report at 10 p.m. by saying the protest was about "more cops and less crime."

The station also covered a protest march from the French Quarter to City Hall. At City Hall, the marchers arrived to find a "peace rally" organized by Mayor Morial already in progress. In coverage provided by WWL, the audience saw a local minister leading a prayer service at the rally. The marchers from the French Quarter, all of them apparently white, attempted to shout down the black leaders of the rally. The station's reporters did not directly comment on the apparent racial divisions that would seem to have been part of the story. Reporter Joel Thomas makes an oblique reference to the situation in his summary when he implies that viewers will have to wait to find out "if the city is about to unite or divide any further."

That New Orleans' journalists generally ignored the racial implications of the rival demonstrations is not surprising. Journalists, like most Americans, tend to have only a vague understanding of contemporary American racism, and coverage tends to reflect that vagueness. Campbell (1995) and Entman (1990, 1992) have found local television journalists to be particularly inept in how they portray issues related to race, and that the coverage reflects the sometimes-subtle attitudes of modern racism, especially the sense that exists among many white Americans that racism is a thing of the past.

The focus of the demonstration by white French Quarter residents and business owners reinforces the exact theme that all of the city's news coverage had adopted: give the police chief more money to help fight crime. Although it received only sparing coverage, the focus of the mayor's "peace rally" was on the city's larger crime problem. The predominantly African-American group attempted to call the city's attention to the fact that the large majority of the city's violent crime was confined to its poorest neighborhoods. Several studies have indicated that poor Americans of color are virtually ignored by the news media and that the coverage that does exist tends to reflect stereotypical notions about people of color and focuses on the communities' imagined pathologies. (See, for example, Campbell, 1995; Entman, 1990, 1992; Gist, 1990; Martindale, 1990a, 1990b; Pease, 1989.) That WWL-TV and The Times-Picayune ignored the racial implications of the story is not surprising. Nor is it surprising that the city's news coverage reflected a decidedly white and middle-class perception of the crime problem.

The 6 p.m. newscast, which had opened with 10 minutes of coverage of the City Council's meeting with citizens, ended with three-minute report that promoted the station's "expanded coverage" -- an hour-long program called "The Siege Continues" -- that would air at 9 p.m. that evening. Anchor Hoda Kotb introduced the final story on the 6 p.m. news by saying citizens were "demanding support of the police." Reporter Patrick Evans said the days' events were "best summed up" by the mother of one of the victims who had addressed the City Council earlier. The newscast ends with her comments to the councilmembers:

> I think you don't see the faces of parents, spouses and siblings of the murder victims. I think you are so far removed from your constituency that you don't know what's happening.... I want you to look at the face of the grandmother of a three-year-old and eight-month-old whose mother was snatched from them by horrible murderers. These murders occurred, I firmly believe, because there was not enough police presence in the French Quarter. The police presence was not there because you all -- and shame on you -- voted against the police chief's needs.

Her comments are met by applause from those in attendance, and that concludes the 6 p.m. broadcast. The mother's words --

powerfully spoken out of deep grief -- become the voice of authority, of truth: they are offered as the preferred reading of the day's events. Although earlier stories reported that there were actually two police officers within a block of the restaurant at the time of the shooting and that it was highly unlikely that a crime like the Pizza Kitchen murders could have been prevented by a larger or better-paid police force, City Councilmembers who did not approve the police chief's request for pay raises are portrayed as the villains.

The expanded coverage offered by WWL at 8 p.m. continued with that theme, and the woman's comments were repeated in the report that opened the show. Other comments of citizens at the council meeting were included in the report, almost all of them framing the city's crime problem in the context of the police budget. A few comments addressed larger social issues. One black man described "the carpet of poverty" that blankets the city as the root of the crime problem. Another black man said citizens need to "stand up to white madness." But the overwhelming sentiment of the comments focused only the need for an increased police budget. References to racism and its connection to crime and poverty are included, but again that is not an issue that the reporters pursue.

The theme of the need for a larger police budget dominated the program's primary activity, a question-and-answer session over which news anchor Dennis Woltering presided. He directs questions to seven panelists, including Mayor Morial, City

Councilmember Jim Singleton, Assistant Police Chief Ronald Serpas, Police Foundation Director Terry Ebberts, Chamber Crime Commission Chairman Mark Romie, Black Executive Council Chairman Jim Thorn and Rev. Torrin Sanders of the Volunteers of America. In their initial comments, two of the panelists make reference to factors beyond the police budget that affect crime. The mayor says that some politicians were using the events "to politicize what has occurred" and that the increased police budget "is not a solution by itself." Rev. Sanders says that the crime problem needed to be addressed not only by police, but by educators, families and churches. Later during the discussion, Sanders says the city shouldn't "focus on a knee-jerk, need-another-cop reaction" to the situation but should begin to address issues like employment, education, probation and day care. Despite these comments, anchor Woltering seemed determined to keep the discussion focused on the police budget, and his questions repeatedly lead the discussion in that direction. He asks how the money would help, where it would come from, and how a more substantial increase after 1997 would work. Only at the very end of the discussion does he ask panelists "what else can we do?"

Woltering's panel discussion was interspersed with stories related to the crime problem by six WWL reporters. Dave McNamara's contribution, headlined "Streets of Fear," summarized the days events and included much of the city council meeting coverage used on the 6 and 10 p.m. newscasts. Patrick Evans reported on the rival demonstrations at City Hall and said the events were best summarized by one of the protestor's signs that read, "Give the NOPD what they want." Woltering added a field report called "Shift or Tax?" that included interviews with political and business leaders on where the $4 million might come from. Anchor Hoda Kotb interviewed Republican City Councilmember Peggy Wilson, the mayor's arch-rival, who condemned the mayor for not listening to citizens and argued that money for an increased police budget existed and should be approved. Reporter Sarina Fazan covered a memorial service held earlier in the day for the murder victims. Each of the reports continued with the same themes: crime is a terrible problem; the families and friends of the Pizza Kitchen victims were in pain; the city needs to spend more money for police to fight crime.

The final report was introduced by Woltering as an investigation into the "underlying social problems that may spark crime." Viewers who anticipated some kind of examination of the roots of crime were likely disappointed. In his report, titled "From the Streets," veteran reporter and anchor Bill Elder interviewed a group of teenagers whose identities were concealed. The audience is told that the interview took place "behind closed doors in Central City" (a poor, predominantly African-American neighborhood) and that the youngest of the group is 14 and the oldest 18. There appear to be six or seven males and one female in the room, but we are not given any further description of the participants. All appear to be African-American.

In a voice-over, Elder says, "These kids say school has not been particularly attractive, that they can't get a decent job, and that the quickest way to make money is by selling drugs." We see an extreme close-up of one of the young men's mouths as he says, "Only thing you end up with is selling drugs, killing, fast money." Elder says, "Practically everyone in their world is connected with dope and crime." Referring to one of the men we see from behind, Elder says, "He says 80 out of 100 people he knows is involved in crime."

Elder does most of the talking, either in voice-overs or as a question or comment addressed to the unidentified participants who make up his panel. Comments made by group members are short and support his narrative. Elder says, "In order to survive, one must come armed and ready to shoot anybody." He then asks one of the young men if he had ever shot anybody. The man admits he shot at someone once, but that he missed. The dialogue continues, as one of the young men says he has witnessed "two or three" cops who allowed drug-dealing to go on in his neighborhood in return for payments. Elder seems astonished, asking "And they are still on the force right now?" The young man says, "Yes."

Elder then says in a voice-over, "We asked these youngsters what they thought of the gunmen who walked into the Pizza Kitchen restaurant over the weekend and in cold blood executed the employees." He says to one of them, "For them to have killed everybody like that, what are people in your community saying?" One teen says, "Older people say it's wrong... but young people who have been through the struggle know that they were doing what they had to do." Elder asks, "Does anybody in your group condemn what they did, or is that just something that happened?" One responds, "Just something that happened." Elder asks, "No big deal?" Another agrees by nodding his head.

Elder says that the reaction of his teenage panelists is "best summed up in one statement," and we see him asking, "How did it get like this? Has it always been like this in your lifetime?" A young man responds, "It's not that bad to me. Once you stay in that environment your whole life, it's not that bad, I guess. That's just how things are in New Orleans."

Elder then says that in his discussion with the group he found "a new twist" in criminal activity, and "that it's not enough just to shoot someone and kill him. Listen to this." One teen reports that a cousin had been castrated before he was shot to death. Elder asks, "Is this common out there?" and two of the teenagers say yes. A young woman adds that shooting someone is "not enough. They want you to cry and plead for your life." The teenagers agree when Elder suggests that the money the police chief had asked for would not stop crime. He asks them if the city would ever end it's crime problem, and one says, "Never." Elder concludes the report with these comments:

> What you have heard these young people describe about their world is frightening. The question is tonight: What can we, as citizens, do about it?

Even those who champion the traditional routines of journalism would have to question Elder's approach to this story.

To gather a group of teenagers in a room, conceal their identity and then expect them to serve as credible commentators on the city's crime problem seriously stretches basic journalistic tenets. The story hardly fits the usual criteria for the use of unidentified sources, which is considered ethically acceptable only when those sources are critical to a very important story, when there is no other way to get to the information and when their information can be verified through other sources. For a newsman/celebrity to provide a televised forum and encourage teenagers to boast about their criminal lives reflects (at best) highly questionable journalistic judgment. The story does fit, however, with routine coverage of criminal behavior in poor inner-city neighborhoods. One recent study identifies this kind of coverage as journalism's "routinized discourse of urban pathology" (Ettema and Peer, 1997, p. 841). Throughout the story, Elder's questions seem to lead the teenagers to the response he expects. His repeatedly shocked and horrified response to the teenagers' comments is clearly the response he would expect from audience members. We are "hailed" (in the Althusserian interpellative sense) to be outraged at the warped moralistic sensibilities of these teenagers.

The story may actually tell us more about newsroom perceptions of the poor than it does about "the underlying social problems that spark crime." Sociologist Loic Wacquant (1994) says such approaches to reports on the urban underclass are consistent with "common class and racial prejudice against the black poor" (p. 236). He argues that such descriptions

> reveal more about the relation of the analyst to the object, and about his or her racial and class preconceptions, fears, and fantasies, than they do about their putative object. (236-237)

Elder's story was introduced as an investigation into the significant social problems that affect crime, but all we have seen is the same presumed pathology that is reinforced by journalists' routine coverage of crime in the inner-city. This story goes a long way in explaining why the news media are so inept at providing crime coverage that might give audiences and politicians some insight on how to successfully fight crime. For WWL-TV's journalists, the "underlying social problems that may spark crime" are simply the pre-supposed pathological behaviors of the young African-American residents of impoverished central New Orleans. Rather than looking at the social and political factors that created the circumstances in which the urban poor are forced to live, the root of the crime problem is perceived as the shockingly warped value system of the inner-city residents. The effect of the coverage is similar to what Alejandro Portes (1972) once observed of the policies that governed shanty towns in Latin America:

> The grave mistake of theories on the urban slum has been to transform sociological conditions into psychological traits and to impute to the victims the distorted characteristics of the victimizer

(p. 286).

WWL-TV's coverage ended on December 5 with a 3-minute editorial read by station manager Phil Johnson at the conclusion of the 10 p.m. news. Johnson mentions The Times-Picayune editorial and the program his station aired earlier, "The Siege Continues." He says,

> We are under siege. The robbers, the dopers, the killers threaten to take over and destroy not only the quality of life in New Orleans but life itself.... And yet for a whole week or more our leaders were arguing whether or not to make more money available to the police department to fight this plague.... Fighting crime should be this city's number one priority now. Financing that fight is equally important.

By 10:30 pm. December 5, New Orleans' news audiences had been inundated with media coverage calling for the city to spend $4 million more on the city's police force. Many members of the audience certainly believed that the money would make their city's streets safer. Audiences had not been asked to consider the effects of other factors that might affect the crime problem, like the economy or education or racism or politics. They were not asked to consider how the $4 million might actually affect crime, and not once did the coverage allude to the possibility that the money might be spent more effectively elsewhere. The next day, the City Council consented to the police chief's request, likely because any member who might address the issue of crime outside of the context of increased police activity would have had to face a constituency that is bombarded daily with crime coverage that provides only one context, one solution: a larger and more effective police force.

Conclusion

The coverage that followed the Pizza Kitchen murders was full of references to the city being "under siege" by crime. Certainly, the city's murder rate is high, but it has actually been declining in recent years, as have other violent crimes in New Orleans and other major cities. New Orleanians who choose not to sell or purchase drugs during early morning hours in housing developments actually have very little chance of becoming victims of violent crime. The city is not "under siege." Two or three times each year, middle-class whites (two of the three Pizza Kitchen victims were white) become victims of a crime problem that somehow spills out of its established boundaries. News organizations see these stories as far more significant than the daily violent crime that occurs in the city's poorest neighborhoods, and the coverage is extensive. Coverage of the "expected" murders is limited to shorter, less dramatic stories, or the murders are ignored altogether. No front-page editorials, no pleas from Times-Picayune columnists and TV station managers to solve a crime problem that is out of hand.

One could argue that coverage of the Pizza Kitchen murders simply reflected the outrage of the French Quarter occupants who appeared at the City Council meeting and marched to City Hall. Until residents of the city's poorest neighborhoods stage protests and pack city council meetings, the news media will no doubt continue to ignore the far more substantial effect of violent crime in those neighborhoods. Since those neighborhoods have long been ignored by the media and public policy-makers, it is unlikely that they could expect to rally public support by staging a media event. Disenfranchised by years of neglect, many residents are cynical at best in their attitudes toward the news media, politics and political empowerment.

How the New Orleans media covered the Pizza Kitchen murders provides an excellent example of how the routines of news organizations can profoundly affect public policy decisions. The daily coverage of violent crime provides little context to which audiences (and public policy-makers) might respond with anything but outrage and a demand for tougher laws, more police and more jails. Political scientist Anthony King (1997) says that federal tough-on-crime legislation passed during over the 1980s and early '90s

> by the testimony of judges and legal scholars has been at best useless and at worst wholly pernicious in its effects, in that it has filled prison cells not with violent criminals but with drug users and low-level drug pushers....
>
> The way in which the war on drugs and crime was fought cannot be understood without taking

> into account the incessant pressure that elected officeholders felt they were under from the electorate. As one former congressman puts it, "Voters were afraid of criminals, and politicians were afraid of voters." (p. 49, 52)

I am not only concerned with how newsroom routines are affecting political decisions regarding crime and drugs. Journalistic representations of poor people of color are likely having similar effects on other areas of public policy, including affirmative action, immigration and welfare. The "siege" I am concerned with is not the imagined New Orleans crime siege but the siege that exists in the mindset of the city's journalists and is forced on their audiences. Newsrooms -- and not just those in New Orleans -- seem paralyzed by the routines that dictate their approach to issues, and those routines hardly allow for intelligent and comprehensive coverage that might provide the kind of perspective that citizens and public officials need in order to make intelligent policy decisions.

Notes

1. As Stuart Hall (1973a) has argued, the news process reflects an "informal ideology" (p. 88) that is based on "common sense understandings as to what constitutes the news" (1973b, p. 179). Hall contends that the news "is a product of a set of institutional definitions and meaning" (p. 87), and stories that do not fit into the traditional "definitions and meanings" of the news process go uncovered.

2. For example, James Carey (1992) has argued that "neither journalism nor public life will move forward until we actually rethink, redescribe, and reinterpret what journalism is" (p. 22). Michael Schudson (1995) has observed that coverage as it exists often provides only a very shallow interpretation of events:

> The news story informs its readers about politics, but in a specific way. Its meaning lies in the instruction it tacitly gives about what to attend to, and how to attend, within the going concern of American political life. It asks readers to be interested in politics, but politics as the community of journalists conceives it. (p. 70)

And Reeves and Campbell (1994) say they

> worry about modern journalism's foregrounding of front-page, top-of-the-broadcast facts and figures in place of creating provocative public forums for debating significant social issues such as the contemporary drug culture. (p. 253)

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Decontextualization of Hirohito:
Historical Memory Loss
in Docudrama 'Hiroshima'

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Abstract

This paper is a discourse analysis of Showtime miniseries "Hiroshima," aired in August 1995, to explore how Hirohito was depicted to suit the dominant ideology in line with the traditional conservative historical account of him as a robotic pacifist in contrast with aggressive Japanese military. The revisionist view of Hirohito, however, presents a very different picture of his prewar political power, aggressiveness, and disrespect of non-Japanese Asians, which were totally ignored in "Hiroshima."

> There was one notable absentee from the prisoner's dock, as Sir William Webb, of Australia, the Tribunal President, pointed out. That was Emperor Hirohito. Under the pre-war Japanese system he would seem to be as great a conspirator against world peace as any of his Ministers, Generals or Admirals. But, as Sir William went on to point out, the Emperor was granted immunity and 'his immunity was no doubt decided upon in the best interests of the Allied Powers.' That put the question of his guilt or innocence outside the province of the Tribunal. Whether it would have been better otherwise no one now can say. If the decision saved lives, if it smoothed the way for occupation and made easier the process of democratization of Japan, it should prove to have been the wiser course. Only the future has the answer to that riddle.
>
> *New York Times*, November 13, 1948

Introduction

Since the end of World War II, the Showa Emperor, Hirohito, served as the "national symbol" of Japan until he passed away in 1989. The postwar Japanese Constitution, practically drafted by the Allied Powers General Command Headquarters (GHQ), deprived him of his prewar sovereignty and various political powers (Kawahara, 1990, pp. 164-168). Despite long-term controversies in both Japan and its neighboring Asian countries over his role in and responsibility for Japanese military invasions before and during the Pacific War, this "national symbol" prescribed by the postwar Japanese Constitution seems to have functioned so effectively that most Japanese as well as Americans are convinced of his neutral or pacifist position in the wartime political process.

The fact, however, is that the prewar Japanese Constitution (i.e., the Meiji Constitution) conferred on Japanese emperors the direct command of Japan's army and navy, and the final authority of war declaration and peace treaties (Wakatsuki, 1995, pp. 150-153). The dehistoricizing power of the postwar constitutional status of the Japanese Imperial Family is well reflected in a nationwide opinion poll conducted in September 1993 by the *Mainichi Shimbun* (Japan's third largest-circulation daily newspaper) — 84% of respondents agreed with the status quo of the Japanese imperial system as a "symbol," while only 10% supported the idea of its abolition (Prime Minister's Office, 1995, p. 450).

When talking of the Pacific War in the U.S.-Japanese context, the typical opinion of Japanese conservatives can be summarized in their government's position. Miura (1995) presents some Japanese politicians' statements that defended past Japanese invasions as self-defense or liberation of Asia from white domination, and thus regards them as fundamentally denying Japan's war responsibility (pp. 29-33). Moreover, Shintaro Ishihara (1989/1990), a former Japanese Diet member, exhibits his outright resentment of U.S. nuclear attacks, blaming Americans for their "virulent racism" since they dropped no atomic bombs on Germany, and proceeds to contend that American racism is the root cause for trade conflicts between the two nations (p. 28). Not a single glimmer of their soul-searching on Japanese imperialism that annihilated millions of non-Japanese Asians can be found in their statements.

On the other hand, the distinction between "evil" and "good" seems clear-cut to most Americans. One of the most recent examples is the Smithsonian atomic bomb exhibit controversy. Yoneyama (1995) reports that on May 11, 1995, retired Maj. Gen. Charles W. Sweeney, U.S. Air Force, who flew on both the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing missions, testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, that Japanese government officials are impudent to claim that they were also war victims and that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the equivalent of the Holocaust. He went on to state that there are some American academics who support this view, thus aiding the Japanese 50-year attempt to "rewrite" both their own and American histories (pp. 175-176). It seems that the unmovable historical "fact" on his mind is the evilness of the Japanese, which justified the use of atomic bombs.

Whatever arguments are made, Hirohito is almost always missing or at least de-emphasized in the debate about the Pacific War. Why does this always happen? There are at least two functional advantages of decontexualizing Hirohito in the discussion, one for the Japanese and the other for Americans.

Awaya (1995) points out that most of the Japanese wartime generation shares a sense of conspiratorial guilt with Hirohito since many of them also committed numerous war crimes under his name. This recognition makes the wartime generation hesitant to be openly critical of him because the logical extension of such criticisms is reflective self-criticisms (pp. 92-93). In short, discussion of Hirohito's war responsibility opens a Pandora's box for the Japanese; therefore, their communal sense of guilt with Hirohito makes them vulnerable to unconscious avoidance of him in the debate over the Pacific War.

For Americans, World War II was a "people's war" against Fascism, not an imperialist war, in line with their self-image of a guardian of democracy and freedom. "For the United States to step forward as a defender of helpless countries matched its image in American high school history textbooks, but not its record in world affairs" (Zinn, 1995, p. 399). What is missing from those textbooks may be explication of U.S. political motives underlying such incidents as the Philippine-American War of 1899-1902, and State Secretary Hay's declaration of the "Open-Door Policy" in China in 1899, both of which were already predictive of America's future clash course with Japan over imperialistic domination of Asia.

Then, the fact that Hirohito, who had been frequently equated with Hitler and Mussolini in various wartime propaganda programs and movies (for a CBS program called "Our Secret Weapon" as an example, see Braverman, 1996, pp. 78-79), got immunity to postwar indictment, does not quite resonate with "democracy" which the United States allegedly had fought for. There was, therefore, a need for creation of a "myth" — pacifist Hirohito — by ascribing all the war culpability to Japanese top-rank military officers such as Gen. Tojo. Regardless of Asian nations' pressure to put him on trial, Hirohito was eliminated from the prosecution list of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), which was nothing but the product of the Japanese plea to save him and U.S. political consideration (i.e., smoothing of Allied military occupation of and prevention of communization of Japan) that later affected other Allied nations (e.g., Awaya, 1991,

p. 390; Buruma, 1989, p. 12; Inouwe, 1991, pp. 1-4; Kurita, 1989, p. 190). This covert semi-conspiratorial Japanese-U.S. relationship is extremely inconvenient for the American authentic historical account of World War II, because oppressed Asians were completely ignored in the trial process for the sake of the Allied powers' political interests (Yoneyama, 1995, p. 178-189). Thus, taking Hirohito out of the debate helps seamless ideological historical narratives, whether Japanese or American, to be reproduced uncritically. The bottom line is that it has served their mutual national interest.

In August 1995, Showtime aired an original mini-series called "Hiroshima: The Decision That Changed the World," commemorating the 50th anniversary of dropping atomic bombs on Japan. This two-part, three-hour docudrama, co-produced by Telescene Communications of Montreal and Daiei Co. Ltd. of Tokyo, consists of re-enactments intercut with documentary and newsreel footage, and present-day interviews with survivors, key military personnel, and scientists involved with the atomic bomb development. The first segment deals chiefly with the period from Truman's inauguration (April 12, 1945) to his being informed of success of the first atomic bomb test while at Potsdam (July 16, 1945), and the second half deals with the remaining history leading to U.S. nuclear attacks and the Japanese surrender. This show was immediately followed by the "Making of 'Hiroshima'" (i.e., inside story of the show's production).

Also noteworthy is the fact that Canadian director Roger Spottiswoode took charge of the American sequences, and Japanese director Koreyoshi Kurahara the Japanese counterpart. The program blended both parts, basically following the chronological order of historical events. In order to present the Japanese perspective, Spottiswoode, who originally came up with the concept and the format of this docudrama, "decided to stick with authenticity and film the [Japanese] scenes in Japanese with English subtitles" (Holloway, 1995, p. 7).

Although the main theme of "Hiroshima" is how political decision-making processes in the United States and Japan led to U.S. nuclear attacks on Japan, it serves as excellent material for probing the ideological depiction of Hirohito in that it did not avoid putting him on the screen. Hirohito's presence in "Hiroshima" is consistent with the historical master-narratives reflecting both Japanese and American coherent cultural understanding of the wartime history.

In this paper, how Hirohito is ideologically depicted in "Hiroshima" at the point of encoding — dominant or preferred meanings (see Hall, 1980) — is examined through discourse analysis. However, historical examination of his responsibility for the war is first in order. Especially in recent years, revisionist reading of wartime history, which had long been suppressed in Japan, has been gradually gaining power in revealing hidden aspects of Hirohito.

For instance, Awaya (1991) points out that more and more Japanese scholars have started employing the expression the "Fifteen-Year War," instead of the Pacific War, to emphasize the historical continuity among three interrelated wars — the Manchurian Incident in 1931, the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945, and the Pacific War (p. 386). As Tuchman (1994) states, "[a]ny social phenomenon must be understood in its historical context," which includes an interpretative framework that provides the "meaning of history" (p. 306). Thus, Hirohito's war responsibility also should be investigated in the revisionist view of contextually grounded history, not in traditional historical accounts of isolated incidents.

The Showa Emperor

What are widely-held images of Hirohito, which are resonant with both Japanese and American understanding of world history? Sincere? Merciful? Or "the first gentleman of Japan," as Gen. MacArthur told us (Buruma, 1989, p. 13)? Because half a century has been passed since the end of World War II, and more importantly, Hirohito has passed away, our memories of him will deteriorate day by day. Based primarily on several Japanese revisionist historians' interpretations of the diaries and memoirs of certain persons who were close to Hirohito, this review, though not comprehensive, attempts to delineate hidden or ignored historical aspects of (1) Hirohito's political power, (2) his view of the world, and (3) his personality. As Awaya (1991) states, study of those diaries and memoirs "gives us a very vivid and credible image of Emperor Showa" (p. 389).

(1) Political power of Hirohito

After the Pacific War, both Japan and the United States promulgated a uniform account of Hirohito's political engagements in wartime Japan. The account says that in his reign, he made only two or three exceptional political decisions. For instance, feeling that none of the books about Hirohito published after his death did justice to him, Hoyt (1992) states in the preface that "[o]nly three times in Hirohito's reign was he able to break the bonds of the imperial system that imprisoned him and lash out against the Gunbatsu [the military and naval conspirators]" (p. vii). These three incidents are resignation of Prime Minister Giichi Tanaka in 1928 in conjunction with assassination of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin (pp. 53- 63), suppression of the coup rebels in the February 26 Incident in 1936 (pp. 90-103), and the Japanese surrender (pp. 141-147). Similarly, Buruma (1989) mentions the last two incidents (p. 12). In short, this view highlights Hirohito as a constitutional monarch.

Thinking logically, however, it is extremely unnatural that Hirohito always played a role of a robotic puppet, despite the fact that he made the most important decision by himself — the Japanese surrender. For instance, there is written evidence for several cases that when a new prime minister formed his Cabinet, Hirohito gave to the prime minister his own well-thought directions for domestic and foreign policies, which is contradictory to the image of a robot (Inouwe, 1991, pp. 43-49).

Moreover, the uniquely Japanese decision-making process — *nemawashi* — should be taken into consideration. According to Midooka (1990), *nemawashi* is "groundwork laid unobtrusively in advance or behind-the-scenes negotiations aimed at reaching a consensus" (p. 485). The point is that almost all proposals for domestic and foreign policies were first presented to, and were then carefully examined by Hirohito. If he did not like a proposal, he ordered authoritative proposers to rework it. Conversely, there were very few significant incidents about which he had no prior knowledge, including the Japanese Pearl Harbor attack (Inouwe, 1991, pp. 178-181). In this sense, he practically made his own spontaneous judgments. Before official appointments for major posts (e.g., prime ministers, lord keepers of the privy seal, generals, admirals), Hirohito inspected the list of the proposed personnel, and expressed his opinion, which most of the time affected the final outcome (Inouwe, 1991, pp. 17-40).

Because of the execution of former Prime Minister Gen. Hideki Tojo, which was the sentence handed down in the IMTFE, we tend to scapegoat him as the most evil Japanese leader. The truth, however, is that nobody had tried to be as loyal to Hirohito as Tojo (Yamada & Kouketsu, 1991, pp. 32, 126-127). Hirohito himself evaluated Tojo as one of the most loyal military personnel (Takahashi, 1989, p. 137). Further, as signs of defeat gradually showed up in the latter half of the Pacific War, those close to Hirohito, including the Imperial Family, gained power by attempting to shift all war responsibility to Tojo and the army officials. They worried about the possibility of blame being placed on Hirohito and the entire imperial system in the future (Inouwe, 1991, pp. 209-218; Yamada & Kouketsu, 1991, pp. 111-149). How successful this attempt was can be answered by taking a look at the judgments of the IMTFE.

From this review of his political involvement, we have to judge that Hirohito had not been a puppet-like constitutional monarch. He carefully made his own decisions, and directed his military (i.e., the Imperial Army and Navy) to execute his direct and indirect orders faithfully.

(2) Hirohito's view of the world

The traditional view of Hirohito as a constitutional monarch tends to generate a positive image of him. Hata (1984) is sympathetic to Hirohito. He especially emphasizes Hirohito's desire for "peace" and states that only eager young cadets wanted to continue war. He even goes on to say that the suicides of war leaders made Hirohito look extremely culpable for the war because somebody had to take responsibility for the war on trial (pp. 166-168). Overemphasis on Hirohito's "last" political decision invents an aura of "pacifism" behind him. However, we have to make a clear distinction between "cease-fire" and "pacifism." Was Hirohito really a "pacifist"?

Not really. Regarding initial military successes in 1941, Hirohito frankly exhibited his delight and gratification, and conferred official praise on the Imperial Army and Navy (Yamada & Kouketsu, 1991, pp. 54-55, 89). Inouwe (1991) points out that Hirohito had done the same thing before -- the year after the Kwantung Army (a branch of his military) took offense in Manchuria in 1931 (pp. 88-90). As the situation of the Pacific War was going against Japan day by day, Hirohito insistently kept asking high-class military officers whether his military could still "give a blow" to the United States (Inouwe, 1991, pp. 202-203; Takahashi, 1989, pp. 93-94). Even after the Tojo cabinet was dissolved (July 17, 1944), his militaristic aggressiveness and persistence on continuation of the war were seen until the German surrender (Yamada & Kouketsu, 1991, pp. 198).

Thus, we can see in Hirohito the image of a "strategist," rather than a "pacifist." Moreover, he hesitated to stop the war and make negotiations whenever he saw a chance that Japan would win, or had a desperate desire for victory (for his persistence on continuation of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945, see Inouwe, 1991, pp. 115-117, 238-239). In other words, at least during the Fifteen-Year War, he did not care at all about the suffering of non-Japanese Asians caused by his military. His official statements after the war ostensibly show his semi-racist attitudes toward Asian countries. While he told the British royal family that with "heartbreaking feelings" he had put his signature on the war declaration that was "against his will," this very same war was an "unfortunate incident" in relation to China, and an "unfortunate past" in the Japanese-Korean relationship (Takahashi, 1989, pp. 133-134, 243, & 262). This tendency is also found in a transcription of his monologue of his feelings and account about the Fifteen-Year War, which was addressed to his close aides (*Showa tenno no dokuhaku*, 1990). Both Awaya (1991) and Inouwe (1991) point out that he seemed to feel no sense of guilt for the war that brutally killed millions of Asians.

The decisive example of Hirohito's "sense of guilt" is his statement made in the Imperial Council held on August 14, 1945, in which he decided on surrender. Talking about the imminent threat of defeat facing Japan, he referred to the Meiji Emperor's (Hirohito's grandfather) situation at the time of the three-nation interference, in which the three imperialistic powers — Russia, France and Germany — required Japan to return to China the Liaodong Peninsula seized as the result of the Japanese victory of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. He stated that he would like to expect the future recovery of Japan while bearing the unbearable at this moment (Takahashi, 1989, pp. 106-107).

To Hirohito, therefore, the Japanese surrender to the Allied Nations was similar to the situation around the period of the three-nation interference. Then, was he saying that he was willing to cause this war again when Japan would recover? Yamada and Kouketsu (1991) think so (p. 242). The point here is that Hirohito expressed no remorse toward non-Japanese Asians oppressed and brutalized by the Japanese. In his view, Japan attempted to "liberate" non-Japanese Asians being oppressed by the Whites, but simply failed. If Japan's manslaughtering sprees had really emancipated Asian countries, more than 20 million non-Japanese Asians would have long been gratified in heaven.

(3) Hirohito's personality

It has been widely disseminated that in his first meeting with MacArthur at the American Embassy on September 27, 1945, Hirohito offered to bear the "sole responsibility" for the war, showed his willingness to submit himself to whatever judgment MacArthur would make, including hanging, and desired to save his people from starvation (Takahashi, 1989, p. 117). Yet, as we all know, MacArthur and Hirohito had agreed to keep the meeting's proceedings secret, and even now, we are not sure what exactly happened during the meeting. So, where did this leak first come from? Of course, the primary source was always Gen. MacArthur. An interesting irony is that in the notes made by the interpreter of this meeting, which were later published, there is no mention of Hirohito exhibiting his willingness to take the "sole responsibility" (Kawahara, 1990, pp. 147-148). If Hirohito actually made this statement, we are supposed to believe that the interpreter "inadvertently" left out this critical information no matter how implausible it seems.

It is true that in the August 14, 1945 Imperial Conference, Hirohito said he did not care what would happen to him. Yet, in *Showa tenno no dokuhaku* (1990), we can see his attempt to avoid any war responsibility: denial of his authority in the wartime decision-making process, and presentation of himself as a "pacifist." Considering the fact that this monologue was produced by Hidenari Terasaki, who worked as a liaison between the GHQ and Hirohito after the war, it is conceivable that both the U.S. Occupation Army and Hirohito needed some material to constitute part of evidence for his innocence (p. 99).

Moreover, even when Hirohito finally came to feel inclined toward cease-fire negotiations in 1945, he still stuck to maintenance of the "national polity," which led to the further brutalization in the Pacific and the almost complete devastation of Japan. As Yamada and Kouketsu (1991) contend, the meaning of the national polity to him was not the welfare of the Japanese public, but the status of emperor and the Imperial Family (p. 201). The image of Hirohito as a "merciful father" of the Japanese seems to be a carefully-constructed social reality. Also, Hirohito was not a benevolent god, but just another human being. As the war situation was going from bad to worse, Hirohito seemed to have a nervous breakdown, and became easily excited because of his disagreements with other members of the Imperial Family (Inouwe, 1991, pp. 228-229; Yamada & Kouketsu, 1989, pp. 143-144).

To sum up, "[t]he conclusion we must draw from these documents is that Emperor Showa, during the years from his enthronement until the defeat in the war, was not necessarily a constitutional monarch or a pacifist, much less a puppet or a mere robot of the military" (Awaya, 1991, p. 389). The revisionist reading of Hirohito's history presented here gives a point of view that offers a juxtaposing hidden historical meaning, challenging the traditional conservative view of him. How are those diametrically opposite views, which have been cultivated for a long time, reflected in contemporary cultural artifacts? This is a question to be pursued in this paper.

Ideological Analysis

As far as encoding is concerned, there are always dominant or preferred meanings embedded in media texts, narratives and images. Hall (1980) underscores the importance of the encoding-decoding relationship of dominant "mappings" in the sense-making process:

> New, problematic or troubling events, which breach our expectancies and run counter to our 'common-sense constructs', to our 'taken-for-granted' knowledge of social structures, must be assigned to their discursive domains before they can be said to 'make sense.' The most common way of 'mapping' them is to assign the new to some domain or other of the existing 'maps of problematic social reality'. We say *dominant*, not 'determined', because it is always possible to order, classify, assign and decode an event within more than one 'mapping'. But we say 'dominant' because there exists a pattern of 'preferred readings'; and these both have the institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized. (p. 134).

Examination of media texts or narratives alone may not be a sufficient basis for characterizing their interaction with audiences (Larsen, 1991, p. 129). Based on the theoretically surmised infinite power of connotations, some semioticians (e.g., Barthes, Derrida) celebrate the possibility of polysemy — a "'triumphant plural' of signifiers which would 'float' above the signified, refusing to be in any way anchored down or constrained" (Silverman, 1983, p. 32). However, it is also true that the audiences' understanding of media discourse is their sense-making process, thus usually being bound to their own cultural constraints. Otherwise, there would be "no" possibility that a society as a whole shares some coherent cultural understanding; postmodern chaos would be the outcome. In news discourse, a "framing is not necessarily a conscious process on the part of journalists;

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it may well be the result of the unconscious absorption of assumptions about the social world in which the news must be embedded in order to be intelligible to its intended audience" (Hackett, 1985, pp. 262-263). More broadly, this principle seems to apply to any "cultural agents," including TV and movie directors, whose creativity is constrained by their own assumptions about the social world that they are depicting. Referring to interrelationships among propositions to form audiences' conceptual scripts, Dijk (1991) states as follows:

> Our shared, social knowledge of such scripts provides the numerous "missing links" between the concepts and propositions of the text, which is, so to speak, a semantic iceberg of which only the tip is actually expressed, whereas the other information is presupposed to be known by the readers. (p. 112)

In short, the convergence of our social cognitions occurs because of the same essential interpretive framework called "ideology." "Such an ideology features the basic norms, values, and other principles which are geared towards the realization of the interests and goals of the group, as well as towards the reproduction and legitimation of its power" (Dijk, 1991, p. 118). Thus, according to White (1992),

> . . . ideological criticism examines texts and viewer-text relations to clarify how the meanings and pleasures generated by television express specific social, material, and class interests. This is not to say that a given program or episode directly expresses the beliefs of a particular producer, writer, director, or network programmer — though obviously these may be contributing influences and viewpoints. Nor does it mean that there is some conspiracy among television executives to control the ideas expressed through the medium. Rather, ideological analysis focuses on the systematic meanings and contradictions embodied in textual practices. This includes the way familiar narrative, visual, or generic structures orient our understanding of what we see and how they naturalize the events and stories on television. (p. 173)

The "hidden" history of Hirohito presented in the Literature Review does not seem to be prevalent among Americans as well as the Japanese. Then, their sense-making

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constitutes the normalizing pattern of their common cultural understanding of the war history, in which Hirohito is embedded.

Fiske (1992) identifies three levels of textuality, which he thinks cultural studies should investigate in the study of meaning creation:

> First, there is the primary text on the television screen, which is produced by the culture industry and needs to be seen in its context as part of that industry's total production. Second, there is a sublevel of texts, also produced by the culture industry, though sometimes by different parts of it. These include studio publicity, television criticism and comment, feature articles about shows and their stars, gossip columns, fan magazines, and so on. They can provide evidence of the ways in which the potential meanings of the primary text are activated and taken into their culture by various audiences or subcultures. On the third level of textuality lie those texts that the viewers produce themselves: their talk about television; their letters to papers or magazines; and their adoption of television-introduced styles of dress, speech, behavior, or even thought into their lives. (p. 319)

The third level of textuality can be elicited by studying some secondary texts such as independent criticism and comment that "attempt to 'speak for' the third level" (Fiske, 1992, p. 319). Therefore, this paper also utilized some secondary-level texts as a key to actual audience's understanding of "Hiroshima."

Subsequent analysis in the next section focuses on the "unsaid" as well as the "said." While primarily analyzing Hirohito's appearances on the screen chronologically, this paper also examines other important elements (e.g., references to Hirohito in others' conversations, contrast between the "pacifist" and "bellicose" groups in Japanese politics). Ideological analysis allows us to expand the possibility to find contextual connections — aesthetic, structural, and semantic. Meanings do not derive from monolithic broadcast media logics, but from contextual interaction of various elements contained in TV programs with the audience. Finally, names of historical figures rather than those of actors who played them are used most of the time to make the analysis more understandable.

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'Hiroshima' as Historical Narrative

One of the most important facets of "Hiroshima" as a general framework is its various attempts to engender an atmospheric historical accuracy, although the word "accuracy" is somehow troublesome as will be shown shortly. In the "Making of 'Hiroshima'," both Spottiswoode and Kurahara emphasize their efforts to support the accuracy of "Hiroshima" by using documentary footage, research materials (e.g., diaries, official documents) and a variety of real-life eyewitnesses. Also, the re-enactments cast actors who resemble historical figures pretty well (e.g., Harry Truman, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, Japanese Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki, Prince Fumimaro Konoye [cousin of Hirohito]). As Spottiswoode underscores the "realness" of this docudrama, their efforts seem to function to produce an atmosphere of authenticity of their historical narratives. Further, the merging of documentary footage and purposefully obscured black-and-white drama film, whenever it is possible, adds to this authenticity by blurring the distinction between these two separate segments of visuals. Although "Hiroshima" also uses color films, switching between monochrome and color does not cause any jarring artificiality because flamboyance of colors is somehow subdued with a bit of sepia.

As for depiction of Hirohito, Spottiswoode and Kurahara seem to have had some disagreement. Conlogue (1995) reports on an interview with Spottiswoode:

> 'I had hoped for a more intimate sense of Emperor Hirohito (played by Naohiko Umewaka),' says Spottiswoode with regret, 'but they felt he should be seen only as he has always been seen: stilted, almost robotic.' In the end, he accepted their work — 'they know what will be believable in Japan' — insisting only that the scenes be cut shorter. 'Americans won't sit still for long formal static encounters.' (p. 5)

What Spottiswoode meant by "intimate" is not clear. However, the general image of Hirohito as a pacifist that "will be believable in Japan" does not seem to have fundamentally bothered him because he eventually accepted the Japanese team's account of history. In other words, it can be argued that the Japanese depiction of Hirohito has some communality with American textbooks' presentation of history, which substantially constitutes both countries' shared interpretation of history. If Spottiswoode had thought Americans would not accept the Japanese version of Hirohito, he would probably have rejected it, just like he forced the scenes of Hirohito's appearances to be cut shorter. In a sense, his basic assumption of Americans' view of Hirohito — traditional description of him as a pacifist — led to his adoption of the Japanese team's work.

"Hiroshima" starts with brief documentary footage of Nazi Germany, the war situation in Europe, the Pacific War situation with the Japanese military, and Japanese atrocities (i.e., a Japanese soldier dragging an old Chinese woman on the pile of dead bodies), and then moves on to Franklin D. Roosevelt's death and Truman's inauguration on April 12, 1945. However, it is not until the V-E Day — May 8, 1945 — that Hirohito first appeared on the screen. Although the focus of this drama is on U.S. and Japanese political processes leading to the decision of U.S. nuclear attacks, all the relevant historical context of Hirohito — his militarism, disregard of oppressed Asians, depression, and willingness to direct the war through *nemawashi* — is already lost, since at this point, Hirohito already felt the possibility of Japan's defeat and learned not to insist on the "give-a-blow" strategy. The framework of "Hiroshima" per se has been conducive to the decontextualization of the war and Hirohito.

This first Hirohito appearance centers on his inspection of the damage caused by U.S. massive bombardment of Tokyo. The drama part depicts Hirohito in his car together with Prime Minister Suzuki and Lord Privy Seal Marquis Koichi Kido. It is mixed with documentary footage of his inspection, sites of devastation, predicaments of people, and as his recollection, his review of troops. Contrary to "accuracy" contended for by both directors, the documentary film of his actual inspection was in March 1945 (Kawahara, 1990). The footage, therefore, can be described as a patchwork collection of chronologically unrelated mosaics to be juxtaposed against Hirohito's exaggerated dead silence and emotional arousal — slowly making a fist as if he could no longer stand this devastation. Melancholic background music also helps to invoke his "pacifist" image.

"Emotion" of Hirohito is the key word. Actor Naohiko Umewaka, who played as Hirohito, states in the "Making of 'Hiroshima'" as follows:

> I don't believe the emperor is a living god. Nevertheless, he has to be presented somehow different from ordinary people. He was taught from his childhood not to express emotions. This film is probably the first to show the emotion of Emperor.

For instance, Hirohito's second appearance further amplifies his sympathetic image. Kido reported a fire on the Palace grounds. When Hirohito asked about old pines behind his mother's house, Kido predicted that they would have been gone. In response, Hirohito said, "One can build a palace in a few months. A great tree requires hundreds of years. But even a great tree doesn't last forever." With the help of background sound bites of U.S. bombardment, his words emphasizes his gentle affection for all living things.

Successively, Kido holds an informal meeting with Suzuki. They put all the blame on the bellicose armies for prolonging the war. Their description of political difficulties to put an end to the war strongly serves to elicit the distinction between Hirohito and the military, which reminds us of the usual "good guy v. bad guy" motif: Hirohito is a good, decent person who wants only "peace," and only army officials wish to fight until "one hundred million die as one." Again, as revisionist historians explain, Hirohito simply felt desperation about the continuation of the war, and had lost his aggressiveness by this time.

Further, Gen. Korechika Anami's (the Japanese army minister) continual aggressiveness and roar make a contrasting contribution to the pacifist image of Hirohito. Anami eventually commits the Japanese samurai's suicidal ritual called *hara-kiri*. Possibly impressed by this depiction of his character and life, an American TV columnist of the *Asbury Park Press* regards Kohji Takahashi, who played as Anami, as the "most outstanding" actor in "Hiroshima" (Strauss, 1995, p. D4). However, it must have been easy for the Japanese to notice that the actor spoke extremely unnatural Japanese with funny intonation, putting too much emphasis on the explosiveness of his anger. Since English subtitles to Japanese were used in the United States, this is not so much of a problem. American audience seems to have adopted an ideologically constructed distinction between the pacifist and bellicose political groups in Japanese politics all the more because of the actor's unnaturalness.

On June 6, 1945, the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War was held by high-ranking military officials and some cabinet members. Contrary to the expectation of the "peace" group (e.g., Suzuki, Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo), army officials had their proposal for continuation of the war passed. At night, worrying about the political clout the armies held to keep fighting against the Allied Nations, Kido met with Hirohito, and presented his own counterproposal to achieve a cease-fire through the intermediary — Russia — as soon as possible (the third scene in which Hirohito appears). By expressing his 100% trust in Kido, Hirohito presents himself as being in the "peace" group. Similarly, Hirohito's complete trust in Konoye for duties of the envoy to Russia marks his strong desire for "peace," and in turn creates an image of his political powerlessness because he tells Konoye to decide what compromises Japan will make in exchange for Russian mediation (the fourth scene in which Hirohito appears).

In the scene of the atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima (in the second part of "Hiroshima" after an intermission), documentary footage is used with some melancholic Catholic Mass. Chronologically, the scenes of Hiroshima before the dropping were first shown, and then, the screen suddenly stopped. In order to enhance visual effect of the devastating atomic bomb, other color films of nuclear tests conducted after the war were mixed with actual footage of the explosion of the "Little Boy" bomb on Hiroshima. One of the scenes contains palm trees that were not planted in Hiroshima at that time.

Kurahara states, "We have to look at sufferings on both sides." His comment signifies that in his mind, sufferings exist only in the context of the U.S.-Japanese relationship. Throughout "Hiroshima," sufferings of Asians have been completely ignored. Disregard of the historical context of the Pacific War helps to give the impression that this war concerned only the United States and Japan. This framework dismisses Hirohito from Japanese war aggression. One day after the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Hirohito states, "I think about explaining this bomb to our son . . . and find I have no wish to do so. I do not want him to know such a thing exists in this world. And yet it does." Hirohito is always a gentle pacifist in "Hiroshima."

The last scene in which Hirohito showed up is the Imperial Conference held on August 14, 1945. Wiping his tears, Hirohito says,

> It matters not what happens to me . . . I can no longer watch as the nation is reduced to ashes . . . nor further bear to see my people consumed by the flames of war. As the Emperor Meiji once said . . . I shall endure the unendurable, so must you.

The trouble might be the phrase "As the Emperor Meiji once said." This is an accurate presentation, but how many of the audience can grasp its historical context and Hirohito's real intention as explicated in this study? This dehistoricization may facilitate a complete misunderstanding of Hirohito and Japan's war culpability by excessively dramatizing the brutality of U.S. nuclear attacks. The apology controversy frame in the "Making of 'Hiroshima'" — interviews with American and Japanese college students regarding who is to blame — ignores Asia, and thus Japanese emotional bitterness is paradoxically exaggerated to let more and more Americans suffer moral stigma.

Conclusion

On January 7, 1989, Hirohito died from duodenal cancer, and the turbulent and controversial Showa era was over. In that year, some of Japanese mainstream media conducted opinion polls about what the Japanese public thought about Hirohito's war responsibility (Prime Minister's Office, 1990). Table 1 summarizes their results.

Contrary to the clear indication of his war responsibility elicited through the Literature Review in this paper, as much as one-third of the Japanese public still negates Hirohito's accountability for the Pacific War. Further, the "Neither" and "Don't know" categories occupy approximately one-third of opinions. It can be said that in its intensity, the "not responsible" group still constitutes the majority in the public opinion, which in turn creates the dominant "*kuuki*" — "air," "atmosphere," or "standard of judgment" in a Japanese group or society. According to Ito (1993), *kuuki* "requires each individual, group, or organization to accept and comply with it, making those who do not agree with it silent or reluctant to speak up" (p. 263). This is exactly why there are a great deal of indecisive people. Therefore, "Hiroshima" seems to have chosen to depict Emperor Hirohito along the conservative line of interpretation of his role in the Pacific War.

Of course, certain segments of the Japanese society have long maintained critical attitudes toward the Japanese government and Hirohito regarding their roles in the Pacific War, and, especially during the period of Hirohito's illness and death, they exhibited defiant antipathies against him. For instance, members of the Japan Communist Party did not attend Akihito's (current Japanese emperor) inaugural meeting (Smith, 1989). Further, some Japanese popular books and magazines paid their "disrespects" to Hirohito with various defamatory jokes (Wetherall, 1989).

However, their critical social power has always encountered two immense obstacles — constrained education through government censorship (Kurita, 1989, p. 190) and right-wing violence (Awaya, 1991, p. 396). In a society where freedom of speech, though constitutionally guaranteed, has not yet been practiced in its full meaning, it is plausible that media tend to behave in the reactionary way, regardless of our perceived variety of opinions presented to them. In a sense, diversification of ideologies may well be an illusion in the Japanese society. Awaya (1991) reports that when Hirohito passed away, "the newspapers were filled with feature articles on the emperor, and almost all of them praised Emperor Showa for having brought peace and prosperity to the country," and "[s]ome individuals and groups voiced opposing views, demanding that the emperor's accountability for the war be questioned, but they were given little attention in the media" (p. 388).

Against this background of Japanese "public" interpretation of the war, "Hiroshima" was produced and aired for American and Japanese audiences. As many Japanese historians contend, there is no room for legitimating what the Japanese did during the Fifteen-Year War. Such an attempt is exactly equivalent to doubting whether the Holocaust really happened. Yet, Japanese-U.S. political strategy clearly worked to suppress the pressure to convict Hirohito, thus ignoring real sufferings of oppressed Asians. Considering the dominant position of Japan and the United States in the postwar management, the image of Hirohito as a pacifist presented in "Hiroshima" explicates how the polysemy is suppressed in reading of cultural artifacts. Discussing the Pacific War strictly in the context of U.S.-Japanese relationship will reveal nothing; this is only another war between two imperialistic military powers. Under them, there are Asians who remained subjugated. War docudramas such as "Hiroshima" construct an illusory account of history with a dehistoricization of imperialism, functionally serving the underlying ideology — Hirohito's innocence, which is the U.S.-Japanese mutual agreement.

The phrase "No More Hiroshimas" is still being touted, and Hiroshima seems to have been fixated as a place of peace. Whose peace? Of course, this is the peace for people who live in Hiroshima (or more broadly Japan) and are Japanese. Miura (1995) presents a Korean's opinion about Japanese general attitudes toward atomic bombs:

> The Korean Atomic Bomb Victims' Monument, which was built in 1970 by Koreans living in Hiroshima, stands *outside the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park* [italics added]. [The monument] was not permitted to be built within the park. Koreans in Hiroshima hold a memorial service before that monument every year, but the mayor of Hiroshima has never attended the service despite our annual

TABLE 1
1989 Media Opinion Polls regarding the Japanese Public's Perception of Hirohito's War Responsibility

Japanese media	*Asahi Shimbun*	*Mainichi Shimbun*	*Kyodo Tsushin*
Month	January	March	January
Contact sample (Completion: Rate)	3,000 (2,385: 80%)	3,000 (2,225: 74%)	3,000 (2,129: 71.0%)
Responsible	25%	31%	24.4%
Not responsible	31%	35%	27.5%
Neither	38%	*	43.1%
Other	6%	4%	.7%
No answer		1%	1.6%
Don't know	*	29%	
Indifference	*	*	2.7%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100.0%

Note: Each of these opinion polls interviewed a randomly selected national sample of people individually with the similarly worded question about Hirohito's war responsibility. Asterisks indicate that their corresponding categories were not set up. Further, *Asahi* reported the "Other" and "No answer" categories together, and *Kyodo* did so for the "No Answer" and "Don't know" categories.

Source: From Prime Minister's Office (1990): *Asahi Shimbun* (pp. 471-472), *Mainichi Shimbun* (p. 488), and *Kyodo Tsushin* (p. 530).

> invitations. The city authorities appeal to the world as if only the Japanese had been atomic bomb victims. To Koreans, it feels fake to tout "No More Hiroshimas" and world peace with such an attitude. This is merely hoping for peace only for the Japanese. Why aren't they willing to pray for world peace with Koreans? (translation: p. 16)

What the Japanese mean by "No More Hiroshimas" exactly corresponds to their attempt to overdramatize U.S. nuclear attacks to reduce their own psychological sense of guilt for the Fifteen-Year War. Without knowing this real picture of Japan, the rest of the world, together with the Japanese, has been touting "No More Hiroshimas." Referring to the recent Smithsonian atomic bomb controversy, Yoneyama (1995) explains this kind of twisted semi-conspiratorial relationship between Japanese conservatives and U.S. liberals, which is the former's co-optation of sympathetic U.S. liberals into their ideological

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domain. The authoritative view of Hirohito as a "pacifist" exaggerates the image of innocent Japanese during the Pacific War. As such, "Hiroshima" serves to produce more and more sympathetic Americans into being capitalized on by Japanese conservatives, since their past atrocities were completely subdued in tone while the impact of atomic bombs was excessively dramatized.

American-made Pacific War movies (e.g., "Midway," "Sands of Iwo Jima") generally ignore sufferings of non-Japanese Asians, with only Japanese and U.S. historical views implanted in the screen. Unless the Japanese recognize that there is something else they should be discussing regarding the war period of over fifty years ago, their cultural artifacts will always contribute to the dissemination of the dominant ideology that capitalizes on the innocence and ignorance of younger generations in the world. As this paper's introduction explained, the key to their critical reflection is the Showa Emperor, Hirohito. Awaya's (1991) comment should be kept in mind:

> Before we Japanese can talk about the tragedy and devastation we endured during the war, we must face up to the damage and suffering we inflicted on people in neighboring countries and feel genuinely sorry for and grieved by what Japan did. This serious reflection on the past will be very painful for us, but without it how can we expect to be treated as reliable equals by other countries? (pp. 396-397)

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A Small Note on the Author

I believe critical cultural studies, which aims to make social changes, need more candid bibliographical explanations of the authors to reveal their points of view regarding their research topics. In this paper, I take a revisionist position of the war history. I think that in the U.S.-Japanese context, the Pacific War is just another war fought between two imperialistic countries which brutally oppressed non-Japanese Asians. I neither "glorify" Hiroshima and Nagasaki nor American sacred victory. Therefore, readers should be informed of my personal beliefs.

My initial opportunity to critically reflect on the Pacific War came when I had a discussion about Japanese politics with my best friend during my senior year at Keio University in Tokyo. In the middle of that discussion, the meaning of suffrage in democratic societies became a topic, and he told me that he had never voted. While agonizing to locate what he had meant, I assumed that he must be completely apathetic to the politics in general, and asked him why. He confessed, for the first time, that he is not a Japanese, but a Korean, and he has no suffrage in Japan. Yet, I mused — he is a man who was born in Japan, speaks fluent Japanese, but is not able to speak fluent Korean. Since I was not sensitive to Korean communities that have been politically and economically segregated from and discriminated against by the power center of the Japanese society, and had no Korean friend at that time (at least at my conscious level), I still could not understand why he did not have suffrage. To dispel my insensitive confusion, he started explaining about the Japanese military occupation of Korea and compulsory conscriptions of Koreans into Japan, which were initiated in 1910; all I knew about this was only fragmented historical facts (e.g., the year and the then Japanese prime minister). Despite its brutal treatment of Koreans until the end of the Pacific War, Japan has never apologized to nor compensated Koreans sufficiently. Further, second and third generations of Koreans have not been given Japanese nationality and suffrage; their ancestors' Japanese nationality "disappeared" at the time of the Japanese surrender. And he just added, "Look. At that time, there was no such country as Korea."

His words always remind me of the disturbing ambiguity that the Japanese society in general has carried over since its militaristic invasions of Asian countries, and the depressing status quo that the war is not over yet. While we accumulate knowledge of U.S. nuclear attacks through the Japanese governmental propagandistic "peace education," we know little about our ancestors' atrocities and their Pearl Harbor attack. (This was the case especially to me, because I was born and had been raised in Hiroshima Prefecture.)

Finally, there are two things I would like to say here. First, I am well aware that Japanese conservatives often take advantage of American liberals' criticisms of U.S. use of atomic bombs. I think that sufficient care should be taken when a Japanese proceeds to critique the United States: This might be incorporated into Japanese conservatives' functional historical narratives (e.g., egregious causal inferences between Japanese invasions of Asian countries and their current economic developments). Second, given their unmovable culpability for the war, the Japanese, I believe, should take certain actions before criticizing other countries — resume trials of war criminals by the hands of the Japanese themselves, abolish the Japanese imperial system, dedramatize Hiroshima and Nagasaki, issue official apologies to Asian countries, and sufficiently compensate them. I hope this paper will help people recognize core issues surrounding the Pacific War.

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Al-Amiriya, February 13, 1991—Broadcasting Standards of Violence in a Time of War

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Abstract

British television news stations used graphic video during its coverage of the al-Amiriya bombings in Baghdad, Iraq on February 13, 1991. This study uses oral histories, video archive footage and document research to recreate the news coverage on that day and to analyze why the level of violence depicted on TV did not insult Britain's viewing audience.

Introduction

On the evening of February 13, 1991, viewers *of Independent Television Network's* (*ITN*) *News at Ten*, witnessed the first horrifying pictures of the Gulf War. Viewers saw a building with smoke piping out of it and wondered if there were any casualties inside. They had no idea what carnage awaited to be discovered. *ITN's* Brent Sadler began his report like this: "If there was one place of safety to survive the blitz of Baghdad, it should have been this purpose built shelter." (*News at Ten,* 1991). Around 4 a.m. Iraqi time, two laser-guided bombs hit a reinforced building in the al-Amiriya district of Baghdad, Iraq, killing anywhere up to 500 Iraqi civilians who had taken shelter inside. By late afternoon, officials said the bodies of 288 people, mostly women and children, were recovered. (*Facts on File,* 1991)

Many around the world shuddered as they watched charred bodies being carried out of the smoldering bunker, and as they listened to badly burned survivors being interviewed. But in England, many shuddered for a different reason. Instead of being incensed with the excessively violent nature of the bombing coverage, the British public was concerned with the standards of broadcasting impartial coverage. This paper will go behind the scenes—using oral histories of producers, reporters and cameraman—to reconstruct television coverage of the al-Amiriya bombings and to explore why the British public was not offended by the carnage they viewed on television that day.

Statement of Question

Did the British television media's coverage of the al-Amiriya bombings in Baghdad, Iraq on February 13, 1991 go against the Broadcasting Standards Council's (BSC) broadcasting viewing standards as it relates to violence? Why were the complaints dropped? Were some of the reasons for the complaints and the responses given for airing the footage on the bombing carefully thought out? And what have we learned about the British television media and its viewers from its performance on this story?

Literature Survey

Shaw and Carr-Hill (Mowlana, 1992) used the footage from the Baghdad shelter bombings to measure the media's attitude toward the Gulf War. When faced with "visually explicit and ideologically questioning coverage of the Baghdad shelter" most respondents agreed that media outlets in Britain made the right decision to show the images of death and violence.

In the *Persian Gulf TV War,* Kellner (1992) discusses how George Bush manipulated the media. Kellner says the bombing of the supposed Iraqi command-and-control center in al-Amiriya was just one example of how the U.S. military used "quick, immediate, bold, bald-faced lies to hide their crimes."

In *War and the Media,* Taylor (1992) documents the role of the media and the ways both sides of the conflict used the media to influence public opinion. Taylor details all of the significant events of the war, one being the bombing of the al-Amiriya shelter, to illustrate the relationship between the media and the military. Taylor shows how media stories depend on cooperating with the military and how the media in general in all countries supported their country's political stance during the war. Taylor also concludes that the public's response to the al-Amiriya bombings showed that the public would rather not see the realities of war and therefore, television did not give its viewers the full reality.

MacGregor (1994), one of Taylor's colleagues at the University of Leeds, studied how 12 different television services in five countries covered the al-Amiriya tragedy. The reporting of this event showed the similarities and differences between the news values, styles, and "underlying editorial practices in different broadcasting cultures."

Lastly, Morrison (1992) also of the University of Leeds, conducted a major study of the Gulf War. One of the questions he pursued was "How 'real' the viewers thought the presentation of war ought to be." After watching the news bulletins from *ITN*, British Broadcasting Company's (*BBC*,) footage from French Television and explicitly graphic pictures used *by World Television Network* (*WTN*), the study's participants agreed that *ITN* and *BBC* used an adequate amount of images to report the al-Amiriya bombings. As Taylor also concluded in his book, Morrison concluded that British viewers would prefer to keep the horrors, the realities of war off their television screens.

Research

As the viewers continued to watch Sadler's report, they saw a hole punched into the top of a concrete structure. Broken metal rods poked toward the core of the hole, giving it a jagged inside edge. The picture zoomed out and panned down to an even larger hole. The hole was almost the height of the Iraqi man who was staring down it, perhaps he was wondering how many people in the Earth below felt the bomb's wrath. Sadler reported:

> It was clearly hit twice because the points of the bomb entry through thick, reinforced concrete, were unmistakable. The explosion at one end of the bunker turned the structure into a giant furnace, incinerating those inside. (*News at Ten* , 1991)

During the last four words, two men carried a body in a blanket. In two seconds, the viewer saw a peek of what was maybe the head of a badly burnt civilian. Thirty seconds later, the footage, which Sadler describes, was unmistakable. As Sadler reported:

> The regime is already using these disturbing scenes of trauma to attack the allied coalition for the on-going aerial bombardments. At one hospital, staff are trying to arrange the dismembered corpses into something recognizable. Most of these people may never be identified.

During this 17-second passage, four pictures were shown. One of the pictures, an Iraqi man crying, lasted for four seconds. The remainder of this time showed the same scene, rows of charred bodies, taken from three different angles.

The day after the bombing, the *Daily Mail*, reported that the switchboards were jammed following Jeremy Bowen's report on the *BBC's Nine o'clock News*:

> From inside the devastated shelter, Bowen spoke of 'the sickly smell of burnt human flesh' and the 'many bodies obviously children.' Although subsequent Iraqi reports spoke of far fewer victims, he said: "There are up to 500 more bodies to bring out."

Two days after the bombing the *Daily Express* reported that "there was particular resentment over the *BBC's Nine O'clock News*, which showed harrowing scenes of the injured and dead. Several days later the same newspaper reported, "The *BBC* and *ITN* have been inundated with protests about reports from Baghdad." Lord Rees Mogg, council chair of the broadcast watchdog, BSC, said, "Feelings have been running very high. Undoubtedly the scenes of the bombed bunker were shocking. This is certainly the issue which viewers are most concerned about."

Lord Rees was mistaken. The complaints to the news stations and the BSC fell into two different categories. Several viewers were concerned, as Lord Rees Mogg states, with the "scenes of the bombed bunker," the violence that was portrayed by those scenes. However, what viewers were most concerned about was what the use of those scenes meant, which was that they believed British reporters were being used to transmit Iraqi-motivated reports. The *Daily Express* reported that the BSC received more than 20 complaints, and dozens more are arriving. On 19 February 1991, the *Daily Mail*, quoted Lord Rees Mogg, as saying, "The number of complaints has been unprecedented." In the same article, it reported the Prime Minister's press secretary Gus O'Donnel had called John Birt, the *BBC's* deputy director-general, to reprimand the *BBC* for its "graphic reports." Mogg said, the BSC received more complaints about the *BBC* than it rival *ITN* because the *BBC* was supposedly inconsistent in warning its viewers that its reports were subject to Iraqi censorship.

Despite the fact that the BSC received more complaints about the graphic nature of the violence from the video shown from the al-Amiriya bombings than it had from any other broadcasted item, it was dwarfed by the number of complaints of bias received by the news services themselves. The *Daily Telegraph*, 29 February 1991, said most of the 300 calls to the *BBC* and 200 to *ITN*, complained that the "pictures of wounded civilians constituted Iraqi propaganda." And article in the *Times*, 15 February 1991, several weeks earlier, also reported these figures. It however, gave context to this number of calls by quoting a *BBC* spokesman. The 300 complaints received from the broadcasts on the al-Amiriya bombings on February 13, 1991 were "very modest, especially compared to the thousands of complaints received about scheduling changes and extended war coverage in the first week of the war."

The other newly established statutory board, the *Independent Television Commission* (*ITC*) did not hear any complaints about the coverage of the bombing. The *ITC*, which enforces a code over the portrayal of violence and due impartiality, would have been able to address the concerns of those angered over the coverage of the bombing. Suzanne Prance, *ITC's* press officer, said she knew of no complaints. She did say however, that there was lengthy discussion in the press about the angles taken by the reporters from *ITN* and the *BBC*. In the *Daily Mail*, 15 February 1991, it said the "watchdog *Independent Television Commission* described *ITN* reports as 'excellent.'" A possible reason for no or very few complaints may be because the *ITC* wasn't up and running until its first meeting in April of that year.

The other newly-established standards board was definitely up and running at the time, but it did show signs that it was in the development stage. In the Independent, 19 February 1991, it states that the BSC decided yesterday that it did not have the power to rule whether the *BBC* and *ITN* were helping to spread Iraqi propaganda. When the BSC was receiving complaints on the coverage of the al-Amiriya bombings, they were not clear as to what their role may be.

> Although not considering the many complaints it had received about this aspect of the coverage, the Council will rule on whether the news footage contains scenes of excessive violence and horror, especially at family viewing times. This, it believed, comes within its remit.

As reported on 14 March 1991, by the *Times*, the Broadcasting Standards Council rejected 22 complaints, including TV coverage of the bombing of the

Baghdad bunker. Earlier press coverage by the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* suggested that the number of complaints to the BSC on the al-Amiriya bombings alone were going to be at least 20 if not much more. Since the BSC was still deciding clearly what was within its remit, it may have included the complaints about news bias in early reports, such as those in the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*.

Out of the 22 complaints heard by the BSC in March, only three concerned the graphic nature of the video from the al-Amiriya bombing. The BSC listed the name of one man, a Mr. Michael O'Connor of Surrey and referred to two other unnamed viewers as the complainants in its March 1991 edition of the BSC Bulletin. They all complained about how *BBC* and *ITN* news reported on the Allied bombing of the air-raid shelter. The *Bulletin* said Mr. O' Connor was specifically upset with the news bulletins broadcast at lunchtime and in the early evening. In his written complaint Mr. O' Connor wrote the "scenes were too graphic, distressing and bloody" to be seen by the children watching at these times.

Cameraman Phil Bly and producer Angela Fryer were in Baghdad the morning the missiles hit the air raid shelter in the al-Amiriya district. Together with Brent Sadler they carefully assessed the situation. Bly and Jordanian cameraman began shooting footage of the carnage and then began sending it back to London.

Nik Gowing, who was covering the bombings from London for *ITN* at the time, who is now a presenter for the *BBC*, remembers seeing the rushes or the uncut video being fed via satellite from al-Amiriya that morning, "There's no doubt that a lot of the pictures coming in were showing essentially hunks of barbecued meat," referring to the video bombing victims.

With 25 minutes before the noon newscast, Gowing had to write and edit a two-minute package. He said many of the pictures were untransmittable and no one was available at the time to help him cut the video, "I remember it as one of the toughest decisions I've taken on because of the fears about decency or indecency of those pictures." With ten minutes to go before noon, Gowing summoned the editor at the time, Richard Tate (now the editor-and-chief of *ITN*) to make sure the pictures he was using weren't offensive.

Gowing said he didn't think of the BSC's Code specifically when he was cutting or writing his video. His internal guide came from his sense of "common taste standards" developed from working in television news for over 25 years. "It's an instinct. You don't forget it. It's in your system." Gowing said ideally the editor sees the finished work, but sometimes when the deadline does not allow it, this is not possible. Gowing said it was the job of the journalist to gather the information and the job of the editor is to see if the report is acceptable. Gowing believes editors are "thoughtful" of the BSC Code, "They have to be, their jobs depend on it." Gowing said the pictures were violent, but he cut them in such a way that they weren't excessively violent. In fact they weren't violent at all compared to what viewers were about to see at 12:47 GMT, when Brent Sadler's report from Baghdad was going to air.

ITN was the first British news service to use graphic pictures of the carnage from al-Amiriya. Sadler's report contained pictures of people grieving outside and of the interior of the shelter. From inside the shelter Sadler watched a body being brought out in a blanket: "I think it was a woman." (Taylor, 1992) Bly, who had filmed the footage and who had helped edit the report said he believed the pictures were objective. Bly said the editorial process has several layers. The first layer is with the cameraman. Bly says he works under his own sense of common taste and decency standards and he knows, from being a cameraman for more than 15 years that you don't film excessively violence scenes because they will never be shown on British TV.

> You are aware that you're there and eight million people (British viewers) can't possibly witness it themselves. As the cameraman, you are the eye for eight million people. And I am mindful of what I can and what can't be shown.

Bly and Fryer said the close-up, gratuitously violent pictures of the charred bodies that were being transmitted to London were taken by the Jordanian cameraman. ?

After all the pictures are shot, the process of editing is in the hands of the reporter. In the Gulf War, the next layer of censorship was by the Iraqi Ministry of Information. Fryer said when they arrived in Baghdad several at the onset of the war, they were briefed by the Ministry of Information on what they could and could not film:

> We were urged that you don't report on anything that will endanger national security. You do not film troop movements. Under the circumstances, you had to operate under some restrictions and these were reasonable.

Bly said all of their reports were seen by Iraqi minders, but they did very little censorship.

> Unless they (Iraqi minders) would see a building in a shot that they knew had something to do with the military, they didn't cut it out. There were certain buzzwords we couldn't say such as Iraqi regime, it would have to Iraqi government or Iraqi people.

Covering the al-Amiriya was different. The Iraqi minders did not ask to see the coverage that day. The next level of censorship was back in London at *ITN*, where much more censorship than what the Iraqi 'minders' were doing, was usually going on.

After the broadcast at 12:47 GMT, management from *ITN* called Bly and Fryer and told them to stop broadcasting dying babies and bombed buildings. "They simply didn't want to know about collateral damage here," Bly said. "it was against the war effort. I think we were lucky to get out as much as we could." With this in mind, the whole *ITN* news crew, Bly, Fryer and Sadler, were not surprised when the war was over with, with the news they received about their coverage of the al-Amiriya bombings. As Bly relates, Stewart Purvis, the editor of *ITN* greeted the crew and took Sadler aside and told him,

> 'When you go back to London you are going to have quite a lot of criticism for presenting the Iraqi side.' And we thought we were being objective. In retrospect we were. Brent was constantly putting qualifying statements in. We bent over backwards to present the news in as...

he, and all of the broadcasters did an acceptable job. In response to the three complaints, the Council cited section 1 (c) of the Code of Practice. This is under the section 'Violence in News and Current Affairs,' and subtitled under 'Degrees of Explicitness':

> Where scenes of violence are necessarily included in television bulletins, the fact that violence has bloody consequences should not be glossed over. However, it is not for the broadcaster to impose a moral judgment on the audience and care should be taken not to linger on the casualties nor on the bloody evidence of violence.

In Phillip Taylor's Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War, he writes about *ITN* having the first pictures. Sadler's report, shown at 12:47 GMT, had shots that were "quite graphic, though not gratuitously dwelling." Others may argue that showing the pictures at all were in poor taste. And yet others may argue that keeping those pictures on for more than two seconds, which was the case in Sadler's report, it becomes gratuitous. The judging of gratuity is subjective. Because this is the case, the need for a code which may restrict the length of a graphic picture may be useful. In the absence of such an objective code, the judgment of the Broadcasting Standards Council which is made up of eight members, is relied upon.

As customary for the Council during the review of a complaint, its members viewed the bulletins in question. The Council reported that in each case, the images used were largely of a similar kind. The commentaries differed between the reports, but not significantly.

As state in the Bulletin, while viewing the video the Council saw scenes of distressed relatives outside the shelter, pictures of rescue teams inside the building and statements by Iraqis. Although there were pictures of blankets described as containing the remains of victims, there were no shots of exposed corpses.

What was not listed in the *Bulletin* was that in Sadler's report a shot of a victim being carried out in a blanket revealed a charred body lying within the blanket. Sadler brought more meaning to the photo when he said, "I think it was a woman." The *Bulletin* also failed to mention that there were shots of two of the survivors used in Sadler's report that were especially graphic. Both of the survivors were young boys who were badly burned, their bodies covered with sores and blisters. Nevertheless, the BSC Council members must have felt these shots were not particularly disturbing since they did not mention them. ?

As customary, after viewing the video, the BSC asked the broadcasters to give details of its editorial policy and opened up the opportunity for them to respond to particular aspects of the complaint. *ITN* responded by writing to the Council:

> It weighed the need to protect the child audience against the public interest in the reporting of a story arousing international concern and controversy. Accordingly, the *BBC* took a similar view and provided a warning before the pictures were shown.

In *BBC's* first newscast to show human carnage was at 13:00 GMT, February 13, 1991. Before the video was shown, the presenter, Michael Buerk warned, "the report may contain scenes which you may find distressing." The report showed the bodies at a distance and also displayed distressed relatives. When the video stopped abruptly Buerk finished the report by saying, "Many of the pictures coming from Baghdad of burned civilian bodies are considered too dreadful to show you." Some may argue even a caveat warning viewers seconds before the video airs is not enough time to get children out of the room, or does not alert children, when not specifically addressed to them, of the graphic nature of the pictures. The Council felt, however, that the need to show the pictures in order to illustrate the damage of the bombings to the al-Amiriya shelter outweighed whatever emotional damage the pictures may cause to children.

The *Bulletin* stated that the Council considered this story, which at that stage of the war seemed to be of the greatest importance, with its potential effect on public opinion throughout the world, had been handled responsibly by the two organizations, with due regard for the consideration urged in the Council's *Code of Practice*. The Council therefore decided not to uphold the complaint.

The BSC also received a number of other complaints about the coverage of the Gulf War, including complaints about bias and propaganda, which were clearly outside its remit. The exact number of complaints is unknown. But the number of complaints to the news organization is known. (As mentioned in the "Research" section) The news organizations collectively received around 500 calls.

Most of the calls criticized the reporters for broadcasting Iraqi propaganda. An *ITN* operator referred to the overwhelming viewer response in the *Sun*, 14 February 1991: "It's the biggest since Ken Barlow threatened suicide on Coronation Street." editor's note on event In the days following the bombing of the bunker and before BSC's decision on the complaints on the bunker coverage, criticism of how *ITN* and *BBC* reporters handled the story, was discussed in the press.

Much of the criticism, once again concerned the British media being used as mouthpieces for Saddam Hussein, but there was some discussion on how the story was covered pictorially. Several articles in the press were written by *ITN* and *BBC* editors in response to complaints about running graphic pictures of the bombing. Immediate responses by the broadcasters' spokes people were brief and didn't offer much explanation as to why they used graphic pictures and as to why they had crews in Baghdad at all. In the *Sun*, 14 February 1991, a spokesperson said, "The pictures were distressing, but it's important to show them. The incident is a major development." An *ITN* spokesperson said, "It's important you get information from as many sources as possible, including Baghdad."

An article written by Tony Hall, then the director of *BBC News* and *Current Affairs*, went to greater detail on why television crews and why the reports were handled in the manner they were handled, were given. This article was in response to earlier reports in the *Guardian* that told about how a couple members from the House of Commons and several people who wrote letter in the opinion section were particularly upset with the biased coverage of the war. Those letters criticized the *BBC* as well as *ITN* news journalists in Baghdad of being "led around by the nose and transmitting Iraqi propaganda."

In his article, Hall said one of the reasons for broadcasting the scenes from last Wednesday's bunker tragedy was that the pictures would have made it to British households whether they were the ones transmitting them or not. Hall went on to write about guidelines.

> We do not think it is enough simply to remind them at the beginning of the report. If the Iraqi censors interfere with our story-telling, we make it clear at the appropriate point within the body of the piece. On the day of the bombing in Baghdad these

> restrictions 'were pointed up on the one o'clock, six o'clock, and nine o'clock news.

This goes against some of the reports in the press. As pointed out in the "Research" section, the BSC fielded more telephone complaints on the *BBC* and *ITN* because the *BBC* did not consistently mention before its bulletins that they were working under Iraqi restrictions.

An article in the *Sunday Telegraph*, 17 February 1991, talked about how a phone call from Downing Street right before the *Nine O'clock News*, asked the *BBC* to tell the viewers of the reporting restrictions in Iraq before showing the horrific pictures of the bombed bunker in Baghdad yesterday. The British government wanted to remind viewers "that the cameras would not have been allowed to film freely unless it was to help the Iraqi propaganda campaign." Shouldn't freely suggest that there were no restrictions? If cameras are allowed to film whatever they would like and the Iraqi 'minders' had no input on what was actually broadcast, suggest that there were no restrictions at all?

In the *Independent*, 19 February 1991, Dr. Phillip Taylor, a member of a team of academics monitoring 130 hours per day of Gulf War coverage at the Institute of Communication Studies at the University of Leeds confirms that there were no Iraqi restrictions the day of the bombing:

> The Iraqis lifted all censorship restrictions in the hope that the charred, mutilated bodies which crews filmed would serve the purpose, which critics now maintain happened anyway. But

> both *BBC* and *ITN* self-censored the pictures from Baghdad, and British viewers were allowed to see only a sanitized view of the real horror. What is new in so far as television images are concerned is that very little, if any official post-censorship appears to be going on - other than the kind of editorializing and self-censorship which newsrooms conduct themselves.

This goes against why a caveat was used before the bulletins. Since there were no restrictions or direct input from the Iraqi minders on what should be aired, a caveat should not be used to imply that there was. This passage is also saying that there wasn't extra care taken to make sure that the pictures used weren't offensive. Although from some of the accounts of reporters, it did sound like they tried to be as careful in picking what footage was used as they possibly could.

In the *Guardian,* 3 March 1991, Brent Sadler, *ITN's* reporter in Baghdad, said he handled the bombing of the al-Amiriya shelter with care and precision, wary of what this may do as a "weapon for Iraqi propaganda." He said

> From al-Amiriya cam a gruesome spectacle of human loss. I accidentally walked through the corpses of charred victims, saw blackened remains of children shatter and disintegrate on a mortuary floor.

Sadler had to wade through these horrific pictures and choose the least horrifying. Stewart Purvis, Editor of *ITN* at the time, said much of the criticism aimed at the reporters were unjustified. In the *Sunday Express*, 17 February 1991, Purvis said the impact of the scenes from the bombing were "so overwhelming that an emotional scattergun has since been directed at the correspondents whose grim job it was to witness those scenes." Purvis said the correspondents did the best job and made the best decision they possibly could under the circumstances.

Others, like Michael Hickling of the *Yorkshire Post*, on 7 March 1991, agreed *ITN* and *BBC* did a good job in covering the bombing. In his critique of the TV war effort he said,

> In spite of jibes about the Baghdad Broadcasting Company, the *BBC* and *ITV* self-censured themselves in a responsible way. They were, of course, sensitive to the charge that their pictures from Iraq were a conduit for enemy propaganda. The bombing of the Baghdad bunker is the clearest illustration of self-censorship.

The Institute (of Communication Studies at Leeds University) has the full tape of the scenes transmitted after the air raid. Much of the footage untransmittable. There were rows of blackened, limbless bodies and uncovered corpses placed on stretchers. Those pictures that did make it to British household were only a piece of the real horror. British viewers were spared explicitly gruesome footage.

As Nik Gowing said in response to the number of complaints received by *ITN, BBC* and BSC, "If you're in a war you've got to expect that's going to happen. That means there were many millions who didn't complain." The number of calls taken as a result of the bombing dwarfed the number of calls taken from people who were upset with the Gulf War footage interfering with local programming. And for some, the number of calls received from the bombing, was not significant.

Steve Whittle, the chair of BSC says there weren't a lot of complaints because most people were pretty "gung-ho" about the war. There wasn't a public outcry I think because at the end people were realistic enough to recognize that war does actually kill people and it actually kills civilians. Here the public mood was that it was a just war. If it had been a Vietnam-type situation, there would obviously be a great deal more of an outcry.

Conclusion

The human carnage that was shown as a result of the bombing of an air-raid shelter in the al-Amiriya district of Baghdad, Iraq caused only a small number of people to write formal complaints to the BSC. This is compared to the hundreds of calls received by *ITN, BBC* and the BSC on the biased nature of the reporting on the bombing. The difference in the number of calls between the two complaint categories tells a little bit about the audience's news values. British viewers were much more concerned about airing Iraqi propaganda than with the portrayal of violence in this particular instance.

What was unclear about the presentation of the reports was the use of the caveat "compiled under Iraqi restrictions," before each of the news bulletins. That day, for the first time in the war, the restrictions were lifted. Articles in the press suggested that the *BBC* used the caveat before their *Nine o' Clock News* in order to appease the government. Articles written by *ITN* and *BBC* editors mentioned their use, but did not address why they were being used. It can be argued that the use of this caveat lifted some of the burdens of what was being said and shown from their shoulders and onto those of Iraqi censurers.

As discussed, the BSC, along with many experts believe the violence depicted in the al-Amiriya was acceptable and didn't go beyond broadcasting standards. What was interesting was the construction of the reports. This process showed that reporters, editors and cameramen rely on their own standards to avoid visually aggravating scenes of violence. Fryer and Bly's accounts of the war are eye-opening. They along with Gowing were mindful of the Broadcasting Standards Council's Code, but they relied on their perception of their audience and their own instincts to guide their editorial decision making.

Another compelling though brought out by their accounts was that broadcasting standards in times of war can not be specifically articulated or measured. Hopefully, no standards for times of war will have to be drawn out, but the research to developing them could prove to be thought-provoking and unfortunately useful.

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A Show About Nothing?:
Social Manners, Seinfeld and the Dense Web of American Civility

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A Show About Nothing?:
Social Manners, Seinfeld and the Dense Web of American Civility

Elayne Rapping, in her article, "The Seinfeld Syndrome," laments that the highly popular TV series, Seinfeld along with its clones (Mad About You, Ellen, Friends) fills its storylines with the endless "trivia of everyday life." Show topics have included what is the funny smell in the back of Seinfeld's car? Or how do you get a table at your favorite Chinese restaurant or the last loaf of marble rye? She argues that the actual characters and relationships around which all these trivial pursuits revolve depart even more radically from the days of I Love Lucy and Family Ties. Unlike even the wacky Ricardos or the Bundys of Married With Children, these people seldom worry about deadlines and never have disciplinary problems, except with their pets, perhaps. None of these characters has anyone who depends upon them to come home. She also finds in these sitcoms about young Manhattanites with no real family or work responsibilities and nothing to do except hang out and talk about it, a disturbing message about the end of work and family life but without offering much in the way of replacement except celebrating the trivial. Ultimately, she contends that these new programs serve as a sort of dystopian promotional message on behalf of the new economic system in which the majority of people will have little paid work to perform and the traditional family relations that used to bind them together, at least as economic members dependent on the wage of a breadwinner have become completely untendable (Rapping, 1995).

Rapping readily admits that the domestic situation comedy TV genre, with its rigid work and gender patterns, was implicitly sponsoring a new post-war corporate-driven economic order that effectively gathered middle class Americans into suburban bedroom communities to watch the classic sitcoms (The Donna Reed Show, Father Knows Best) and commercials to find out how to adapt to their new suburban lifestyle. But she berates the new friends-oriented sitcoms (Seinfeld) for neglecting to relate to such central arenas as work, parenting, and long-term human relationships (Rapping, 1995).

Perhaps as Frank McConnell has suggested, Seinfeld can best be described as a modern "comedy of manners" rather than a traditional domestic TV sitcom. At first glance, it may seem absurd to suggest that Seinfeld has anything in common with the witty, refined upper class dramas of Oscar Wilde and Noel Coward. However, as McConnell aptly points out, the characters of Seinfeld are just as obsessed and frustrated with following (and often circumventing) the prevailing "social codes"(of an American middle class civility) as the English Restoration comedies of Congreve and Sheridan. He also argues that one of the central differences between Seinfeld and more traditionally oriented TV sitcoms like Coach is that the main characters "know" they are involved in an elaborate, largely artificial social game of witty dialogue, false appearances, and desires. Unlike the characters of the standard sitcom genre, they continuously watch themselves play out these absurd situations even as they realize they can not elude the comic "pull of the absurd." Within the world of Seinfeld, the absurd exists in the little things, not the well-planned pratfall, but rather in the social blunders that comprise the spectrum of social manners in the nineties (McConnell, 1996; Hirst, 1979).

While some critics like Rapping have criticized Seinfeld for focusing on the trivial manners of everyday life, Pierre Bourdieu has stressed that societies place great emphasis on the "seemingly most insignificant details of dress, bearing, physical and verbal manners" because they entrust to the body "the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 87). In fact, he relates that within these emerging societies, manners and habits were initially a form of social class distinction. Bourdieu outlines that within these societies, the refined manners of the upper classes are gradually, although incompletely, disseminated downward through the social hierarchy and finally to other countries whose lack of "civilization" demands colonial-style etiquette lessons. Invariably, these new standards of social refinement and civility become the very essence of the formation of a bourgeois subjectivity. He also relates that since manners, habits, and distinctions of taste are intimately related to a societies' social hierarchy they are by nature highly politicized. Bourdieu further adds that concessions to politeness always involve "political concessions." (Bourdieu, 1977). Ultimately, if social manners and habits are integral in maintaining the existing social hierarchy of a society and even promoting the rise of new distinct social classes (the noveau riche) within the social structure, at the same time, they also serve to exclude certain marginalized social groups (racial & ethnic minorities, gay & lesbians).

Similarly, John Murray Cuddihy, in The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss, and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity, shows how the "great expectations" of emancipated Jews into Europe in the nineteenth century came up against the stoic, bourgeois Christian norm of "civility" and this disheartening experience gradually evolved into "the Jewish problem." He theorized that one central reason for the failure of the Jewish immersion into Western culture comes down to a failure in civility. In this regard, Cuddihy employs Berger and Luckmann's phenomenological definition of "civility" as the implied ritual exchange of cultural gifts that

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occurs between strangers in the West in a typical face-to-face social encounter. Primarily, Cuddihy argues that the initial encounter between the Jew and the Gentile never remained near enough to the surface to achieve a ritual tranference of civilities. Thus, the all-important ratification of Jewish emancipation through social emancipation, in face-to-face social contact with the Gentile, never occurred. He also illustrates how three main social intellectuals created distinct emancipatory (and egalitarian) social theories exclusively designed to "unmask" the seemingly impenetrable veneer of Western civility. Significantly, each of these modern thinkers implicitly sought the hidden essence of human nature beneath the mask of modern civility. For Freud this essence became the unconscious "id," for Marx, "economic man," and for the anthropologist Levi-Strauss, the comparative, intercultural, "mythic man" (Cuddihy, 1974).

Moreover, this emancipatory impulse to unmask, or at least demystify the underlying hypocrisies of modern Western civility can be found within the American-Jewish comic tradition. Such disparate comedians as Lenny Bruce, Shelley Berman, Woody Allen, and Howard Stern have satirized and lampooned a wide range of prevailing American manners (sexual habits, family relations, racial attitudes, etc.) of both Jewish and Gentile cultures. In many ways, Jerry Seinfeld with his keen observational humor and successful TV series, Seinfeld, is part of this continuing American-Jewish comic tradition with its central interest in exposing the paradoxical nature of manners comprising Western civility. While a few scholars like Carla Johnson have focused critical attention on the complex interrelationships between the series' main characters and the classic Yiddish-Jewish folkloric humor tradition, it is important to acknowledge that a major facet of Seinfeld's phenomenal popularity is that its characters and topics are clearly accessible across a wide social spectrum of American society (Johnson, 1994). Perhaps one of the underlying factors for the series' popularity is that it implicitly reveals a deeply-held cultural ambivalence towards the constantly changing social codes, attitudes, and manners of a rapidly evolving American society. On the one hand, the show's characters strongly rely on these manners and social codes to structure their own individual identities while also receiving great pleasures from the social context richness of postmodern American cultural life. On the other hand, these same characters must continuously maintain and negotiate a multiplicity of mutating manners from new culturally inscribed dating rituals to the tenets of political correctness in order to navigate through the hyperreality of everyday social life in late twentieth century America (Kincheloe, 1995). In other words, Seinfeld, through its satirical, absurdist humor, perfectly captures the complex cultural pleasures and anxieties associated with the continued maintenance and practices of contemporary American manners. In order to more fully investigate the complex relationship between the TV series, Seinfeld and American manners, this paper will be organized in the following manner: first, it will examine Norbert Elias's historical-sociological study of the development of civility in Western cultures and its relationship to more "permissive" contemporary Western cultures; and finally, it will use several themes from the theatrical "comedy of manners" tradition along with Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque to highlight some of the inherent contradictions of American civility featured in select episodes of Seinfeld.

Norbert Elias and The History of Manners

Norbert Elias, in The Civilizing Process, begins his book by studying the vast amount of evaluative meanings attached to the notion of "civilization." After reviewing the diverse range of connotations affixed to this term, he postulated that it has one central function:

> "This concept expresses the self-consciousness of the West. . . It sums up everything in which Western society of the last two or three centuries believes itself superior to earlier societies or 'more primitive' contemporary ones. By this term Western society seeks to describe what constitutes its special character and what it is proud of: the level of its technology, the nature of its manners, the development of its scientific knowledge or view of the world, and much more" (Elias, 1978, pp. 3-4).

Elias further relates that by the nineteenth century, the specific contexts in which people used the term "civilization" showed that they had clearly forgotten that it is an ongoing process. In other words, civilization was seen as an already completed process and thus, it was largely taken for granted. At this time, strongly confident of their own moral superiority as a great civilization, these western cultures not only sought to "civilize" the natives of lands they were colonizing, but also the lower classes of their own societies (Elias, 1978).

In conducting his historical-sociological study of changes in manners since the Middle Ages, Elias draws from a number of varied sources including literature, paintings as well as other historical documents in order to illustrate the ways in which people were said to have behaved. His primary sources for the study were the so-called "manner books" of France, Germany, England and Italy which, from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, established the standards of socially acceptable behavior by people in society. It is important to note that these texts were not "etiquette" books concerned with the small formalities of polite society, but rather, especially the earlier ones, addressed the more basic concerns such as with "outwardly bodily appearances" areas which would later become too embarrassing to even mention in public. These texts instructed readers in such areas as how to handle food and conduct themselves at tables; how, when and where to burp, spit or blow their noses; how to behave when sharing a bedroom or a bed with other people at an inn, and so on. Although discussion of these matters now causes some embarrassment, in earlier centuries, they were spoken about in an open and frank manner, without shame. From the Renaissance onwards, there emerged a long-term trend towards greater self-control and more differentiated codes of behavior, while at this same time, socially-sanctioned levels of shame and embarrassment were advanced (Elias, 1978).

Through a close analysis of the manner books and other historical evidence, Elias was able to detect a common pattern underlying various aspects of the history of manners. Beginning with the medieval manner books, Elias determined that the period's standards of behavior, in comparison with later times, could well be described as simple, unsophisticated and basically undifferentiated. These early social commands were bluntly direct (Don't slurp your food; Don't urinate in public) with few evident psychological nuances and complexities underlying the common standard. Even though his study begins in the Middle Ages, he is quick to point out that "the civilizing process is really a process without a beginning" (Mennell, 1989; Elias, 1978). During the time period of the Renaissance, Elias began to detect certain changes taking place, "Now, with the structural transformation of society, with the new pattern of human relationships, a change slowly comes about: the compulsion to check one's behavior increases.

In conjunction with this the standard of behavior is set in motion."(Elias, 1978, p. 82). Significantly, this small self-conscious drift towards inspecting one's own behavior signaled the slow, gradual transition away from only external social controls to more "self-controls." For example, although the social code of not eating with one's hands was at first not absolute or even consistent, only gradually did it become more "internalized" as a habit and a form of self-control (Mennell, 1989).

According to Elias, one of the most telling matters about the succession of manner books was not which social rules they included, but rather the ones they chose to exclude. Over time, such basic social concerns like when and where to spit in public were eventually supplanted with more refined requirements. Invariably, this shift away from certain activities no longer being spoken about in public, ran in conjunction with a movement towards pushing many of these same activities behind "the scenes of social life." This is most obvious in the case of urination and defecation being relegated to certain private places along with increasing the privacy of the bedroom. The hiding behind the scenes of what has become distasteful is one of the most characteristic features of the civilizing process in Europe (Elias, 1978).

Overall, Stephen Mennell, in his analysis of Elias's work, relates that Elias is not just describing changes in individual mannerisms, but also psychological and affective changes. In other words, Elias argues that, in the Middle Ages, people who ate or shared a bedroom together in the customary way, had a different kind of relationship with each other than modern people have, and this difference involved a distinct affective variation in the character and structure of their emotional life (Mennell, 1989).

The manner books showed that the more demanding standards of control over impulses were initially imposed from the upper social classes or people of higher positions on to their social inferiors or, at most, their equals. He argues that from the Renaissance onwards, "feelings and affects were first transformed in the upper class, and the structure of society as a whole permitted this changed affect standard to spread slowly throughout society." This was in marked contrast to the medieval period, when "the social structure was far less conducive to the permeation of models developed in a specific social centre through the society as a whole." (Elias, 1978, p. 117).

One of the central arguments deployed by critics of Elias's The Civilizing Process is that while they may accept his depiction of the civilizing of manners in Europe from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century, nevertheless they also point to the advent of the more socially "permissive society" in the late 1960s and 1970s. Within this apparent relaxation of social controls and a pervasive "informalization" of social behaviors, these critics argued that the civilizing process has been reversed and therefore, this nullifies at least some of the aspects of Elias's theory (Mennell, 1989).

In response to his critics, Elias has pointed out that other periods of informalization have occurred besides the 1960s and 1970s. While he wrote The Civilizing Process in the 1930s, he was well aware of the "loosening of morals," and the social informalities associated with the "Roaring Twenties." In this regard, he stresses that the civilizing process is not a linear one, but rather fluctuates and changes across historical periods. He also pointed out that some of the characteristics of an apparent relaxation of the constraints imposed on the individual by social life actually took place within the framework of very high social standards of self-constraint, standards possibly higher even than formerly. One of Elias's examples was of the changes of bathing suits and the relatively greater exposure of the body (especially the female body) in leisure sports. Although Elias's writings preceded the bikinis and topless bathing of the decades after the Second World War, he argued in 1939, that this type of development could only take place, "in a society in which a high degree of restraint is taken for granted, and in which women are, like men, absolutely sure that each individual is curbed by self-control and a strict code of etiquette." (Mennell, 1989; Elias, 1978, p. 187).

Furthermore, Mennell relates that the first organized research into Elias's informalization processes was Brinkgreve and Korzec's study of the changing contents of the advice columns in the leading Dutch women's magazine Margriet between 1938 and 1978. One of the changes noted was a shift from "moralizing" to "psychologizing." This contextual change of advice relied less on judging matters based on socially accepted role models and standards, but rather more of analyzing a given situation from a number of distinct perspectives. While Brinkgreve and Korzec were first inclined to interpret informalization as a reversal of the civilizing process, Wouters, one of Elias's former students, sternly disagreed contending that the process represented, "a still further shift of the balance from constraint by others towards self-constraints, and therefore a continuation of the main thrust of the civilizing process." (Mennell, 1989, p. 243).

In another study, Wouters inventoried the extend of the informalization processes from a decreasing insistence upon titles to less formality in written and spoken languages, clothing, hairstyles and most forms of music and dance. These trends also included major changes in such central areas as marriage, divorce and sexual relationships, and included the liberation movements which flourished in the 1960s and 1970s. He also determined that while there was a marked decline in the publication of modern etiquette books, serving as successors to Elias's "manners" books, between 1966 and 1979; their place was taken by a glut of what he calls books about "liberation and self-realization," which put the emphasis on the individual's right and duty to fulfill his or her own personality rather than conforming to social standards (Mennell, 1989, p. 244).

Despite the apparent freedom accompanying this new found self-styled liberation, Brinkgreve skeptically adds that the "commandments of the new freedom" are actually quite demanding. For example, in the case of new style "open marriages," he argues that they make very high emotional demands and was skeptical about whether many people are capable of taking a happy, open and encouraging interest in their other partner's relations with third parties. Invariably, Brinkgreve contends that in these more socially-liberated arrangements, the level of "mutually expected self-restraint" has dramatically risen (Mennell, 1989, p. 244).

Similarly, Wouters relies on Elias's ideas to make his argument about the psychological side of social informalization processes. These processes create not only different patterns of self-constraints, but also controls that occur at higher, more self-conscious levels. For instance, Wouters points to evidence from private diaries from many young, middle-class girls in the nineteenth century, which shows that they generally repressed most thoughts about sex, except within the unguarded domain of dreams. In contrast, current young people learn to express their sexuality in a more controlled and socially acceptable fashion, not completely without inhibitions, but within more permissive and diverse social standards. In this regard, Wouters argues that young people's self-control in relations to sexuality has increased to a level in which they are able to both think about expressing and repressing sexual urges or emotions. This heightened sphere of consciousness enables them more than their grandparents or even parents to be able to both express and restrain their own impulses and emotions according to a given situation (Mennell, 1989). Undoubtedly, in order for individuals to achieve this higher level of consciousness within a permissive society they must enact a greater internalization of self-constraints along with negotiating a much more socially and morally complex cultural environment.

Despite USA Today's declaration of the casualness of American civility, Elias's ideas suggest that these social informalities are the effects of a complex process of internalized self-constraints and controls (Kreyche, 1988). While Elias's work on informalization processes neglects to highlight the immense personal pleasures and social choices associated with the relaxation of social constraints, it does seem to suggest that the achievement of a higher sphere of consciousness (and self-constraints) produces a greater threshold of anxiety. In many ways, Seinfeld, with its focus on social codes and manners, expresses the cultural ambivalence attending to these informalization processes and American civility. In this regard, the main characters on Seinfeld must not only understand and negotiate the prevailing social manners, they must also be attuned to each others personal mannerisms. For instance, in the episode, "The Pool Guy," Jerry and Elaine's apparent ignorance of George's idiosyncrasy of separating his worlds into two spheres; one with his fiancé Susan and the other with his close friends (Jerry, Elaine, Kramer), creates havoc as the intensely neurotic George witnesses the collision of these two worlds.

Seinfeld and the Comedy of Manners

According to Donald Bruce, one of the central comic themes of the English Restoration Comedies or Comedy of Manners is that basic human impulses and inclinations must be disguised in reason, "to mask passion and appetite with decorum" (Bruce, 1974, p. 89). In Seinfeld, the main characters inherent drives and desires (sex, money, friendship) must also be disguised while often being comically frustrated and complicated by the impending social requirements of civility.

In many of the episodes, Jerry's libidinal desires are frequently hindered or sidetracked by the dictates and demands of established contemporary social manners. In one episode, Jerry finds that he is unable to find a quiet place to have intimate relations with his girlfriend Rachel because she still lives at home with her parents and his own parents are staying with him enroute to a vacation trip to Paris. The only semi-private place they find for intimacy is at a movie theater showing Schindler's List. Unfortunately, Jerry's nosey neighbor Newman spots them necking during the movie and subsequently, informs Jerry's parents. Following a chastisement by his parents, Jerry goes to visit Rachel only to discover that Newman has already told her parents. At the front door, Rachel's father angrily forbids Jerry from seeing his daughter. While couples necking at a movie theater is a common enough American cultural experience (particularly among adolescents), Jerry violates social decorum in doing it during a film portraying such a grim subject matter as the Holocaust.

In another episode, language, an integral part of the social formation of social manners and civility, frustrates Jerry's best efforts to salvage his relationship with his new girlfriend. For Jerry language and a keen interest in "words" is not only a special pleasure that binds his friendships with George, Elaine, and Kramer (as evidenced by their endless debates over the exact meanings of words), but enables him to make a good income by comically highlighting the contradictions embedded within our rich, diverse system of language. However, in this episode, Jerry's relationship with his girlfriend is severely handicapped due to his inability to recall her name. In effect, the only clue he has is that her name supposedly rhymes with a distinct part of the female anatomy. On their final date together, Jerry fashions several interesting name attempts including the word, "mulva," only to have his girlfriend angrily storm out of his apartment. Although language played an integral role in regulating Jerry's impulses and desires, his most evident social blunder was not remembering his girlfriend's name and thus, providing the social impression that her identity is not really very important to him.

While Jerry consistently finds his own libidinal desires thwarted by social conventions, George has the tendency of first acting on his impulses only to later suffer from the social consequences of his actions. In the episode, "The Red Dot," George, recently hired as a reader for Elaine's company Pendant Publishing, succumbs to a late night temptation and has sex in the office with a cleaning woman. Later, in an attempt to placate her incessant demands for a steady relationship, he gives her the same damaged (it has a small red dot on it) white cashmere sweater that he earlier tried to give to Elaine as a Christmas gift. However, the woman quickly spots the red dot and now insulted, informs George's boss (Mr. Lippmann) about his lascivious activities. Consequently, Mr. Lippmann bluntly fires George for his social improprieties. In response, George's only defense is to feign ignorance of office etiquette in numbly asking Lippmann, "Was that wrong?" In many ways, George with his strong impulsive desires for sex (he earlier confessed to Jerry of his long-term infatuation with cleaning women) is very much like Freud's conception of the unconscious "id." Freud's psychoanalytic theory of humor argues that humor is essentially masked aggression (often of a sexual nature) which gives us the gratification we desperately crave. As Freud relates in Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious: "and here at last we can understand what it is that jokes achieve in the service of their purpose. They make possible the satisfaction of an instinct (whether lustful or hostile) in the face of an obstacle that stands in its way" (Freud, 1976, p. 101). However, if George is the unconscious id run amuck invariably his aggressive behavior must also be punished by the authoritarian "superego" which in this case is represented by Mr. Lippmann.

Similarly, in another episode, George, resigned to live at home with his parents, secures a date with a woman working at a Queens' antique shop largely by convincing her that he is a local homeowner in the neighborhood. After George's parents return home from a brief trip they are shocked to discover that he used their bedroom to have sex as evidenced by finding a discarded condom wrapper. Later, in the episode, his parents visit the same antique shop, meet the woman and demolish her impression of George as a homeowner. As with his brief affair with the cleaning woman, George is again punished for his id-driven social behavior this time by the most authoritarian of superegos, his own parents. As a final insult, George faces the humiliation of being a grown man in his thirties literally "grounded" by his parents for wrongful social behavior.

While George's human impulses are readily regulated and punished through external authorities and social codes, Elaine's specific character problems usually stem from her own strictly, self-regulated, "internalized" social standards. In many respects, Elaine represents Elias's conception of internalized self-controls and social constrictions taken to an extreme level (Elias, 1978). The episode, "The Stakeout," begins in a coffee shop with Elaine gloating over Jake Jarmel, her new boyfriend, a recently signed author with Pendant Publishing. After partly listening to Elaine's remarks, George intrudes by insisting that she will invariably find something wrong with him. Later, in the episode, Elaine fulfills George's prediction by taking Jake to task for not using an exclamation point in recording a note about her friend having a baby. Consequently, Jake storms out of her apartment, but not before he gestures back to her a final emphatic exclamation point. Later, at Jerry's apartment, Jerry openly chides Elaine for amazingly discovering yet another reason for breaking up with someone - "Punctuation."

In a later episode, "The Opposite," Elaine and Jake who somehow have salvaged their relationship, find it once again on shaky grounds when Elaine stops to buy a box of Juju fruits candy. One of the episode's central narratives is that Elaine, while waiting for Jake in the lobby of a movie theater, receives news that he has been seriously injured in a car accident. Before departing for the hospital to see him, she pauses to purchase a box of Juju fruits at the theater's concession stand. Later, at the hospital, a bed-ridden, but still alert Jake demands to know exactly when she bought the box of Juju fruit. Reluctantly, she admits that she purchased them after hearing the news of his accident. Following Elaine's painful confession, Jake demands an end to their relationship and angrily orders her to leave his hospital room at once. As with Jerry's embarrassing admission that he could not remember his girlfriend's name, Elaine's main social blunder is that her act fosters the social appearance that she was not really upset by the news of Jake's accident and in fact, she took the time to service her own personal appetites.

One of the underlying themes that cuts across the comedy of manners genre and Seinfeld is an overwhelming concern with maintaining social appearances. David Hirst, in Comedy of Manners, relates that the final line of Joe Orton's Loot: "People would talk; we must keep up appearances," reflects not only a belief basic to his plays but to the genre as a whole. The characters are fully aware they are playing a game, where the stakes invariably involve the satisfaction of a range of desires (monetary, sexual, ambition); and a game, moreover, in which they must stay within the social rules of society. As Hirst relates, "these rules are society's unwritten laws regulating behaviour, the dictates of propriety which, though they may differ in detail from age to age and class to class, are always basic to the conduct of the characters in the comedy of manners" (Hirst, 1979, pp. 2-3).

Likewise, the main characters (Jerry, George, Elaine) of Seinfeld are just as concerned with the intricate social manners and details that comprises their own social appearances. Although Kramer is definitely concerned with his social image, he consistently follows his own innate impulses and inclinations often oblivious of any resulting social consequences. In Seinfeld, Kramer is portrayed as an individual with almost uncontrollable impulses and appetites. For instance, in one episode, after Kramer insults his local green grocer, and is banned from store, he is forced to rely on George and Jerry to buy his fresh fruits and produce since he refuses to shop at a supermarket. A main part of the humor of this episode is the sheer depths of Kramer's addiction to "fresh" produce, and how emotionally distraught he becomes when he realizes his produce connection might be cut off.

The thematic of maintaining social appearances is central to the comic narrative structure of Seinfeld episodes in which small social blunders always seem to escalate into highly absurd comic situations. For instance, the episode, "The Gymnast," begins with George boasting to Jerry about how adept he is in handling his girlfriends' mothers. At a house party with his girlfriend and her mother, George's pristine appearance is shattered when the mother sees him grabbing for a discarded eclair in the kitchen garbage container. Later, the mother spots George cleaning the windshield of a parked car, a situation brought about when he accidently spilled a cup of coffee on the car and attempts to clean the windshield for the driver. Of course, to the mother, the sight of George cleaning the windshield reinforces her impression of him as a street panhandler and a "bum." As a final attempt to change the mother's misguided impression of him, George attends another house party. Unfortunately, George's penchant of loosening his clothing when in the bathroom takes a disastrous turn when he is temporarily mesmerized by one of Kramer's hypnotic computerized art prints (hanging in the bathroom) and inadvertently, returns to the party not wearing any shirt. Ultimately, George's proficient tact with his girlfriend's mother backfires since he now appears only competent in forming the "wrong" social appearance with them.

One related aspect of Seinfeld's comic narrative construction are its interweaving narrative situations. Within most Seinfeld episodes are separate narratives involving one or more of the characters which inevitably either intersect or at least interrelate to each other throughout the narrative course of the program. As a contemporary comedy of manners, Seinfeld satirically and painstakingly shows the inescapable interdependency underlying American civility. In many of the episodes, one person's unintentional acts or social blunders usually causes irrefutable comic damage across a diverse range of interweaving narrative situations. For instance, in the episode, "The Gymnast," various narrative actions including Elaine tossing an open ink pen into her purse based on one of Mr. Pitt's (her boss) commands and Kramer's act of showing her boss an example of computerized artwork interact together to create the final absurd image of the mesmerized Mr. Pitt wearing an ink stained Hitler-like mustache addressing a board meeting about taking over the "Poland Creek" bottled water company. Also, within this same episode, Kramer's computerized artwork effectively works to help mesmerize George into forgetting to put his shirt back on, after leaving his girlfriend's mothers bathroom. While these intersecting comic narratives frequently lead to the humorous creation of identifiable absurdist moments, they also serve to satirize the intense interdependence and the related complexities associated with contemporary American civility. Despite the seemingly indomitable individualism attached to postmodern American civility, Seinfeld comically argues that even small, unrelated acts do matter and thus, have undeniable social effects for others. Seinfeld illustrates Elias's contention that greater individual freedoms and the relaxation of external social controls within the contemporary "permissive society," can only exist within a complex web of social interdependency.

Bakhtin's Carnivalesque and Seinfeld

Robert Stam argues that Mikhail Bakhtin first sketched out his visionary ideas concerning the notion of the "carnivalesque" in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, but it was in Rabelais and His World that gave these concepts their fullest fruition. Stam further relates that for Bakhtin, Rabelais was "the least understood and appreciated" of all European writers because most scholars failed to comprehend the works link with popular culture and popular festivities such as carnival, and did not discern the literary modes associated with carnival - "that is, parody and grotesque realism." (Stam, 1989, pp. 85-87).

According to Stam, Bakhtin's "carnival," refers to the distinct type of revelry whose origins can be traced back to the Dionysian festivities of the Greeks, but which reached its apogee of both observance and symbolic meaning in the High Middle Ages. In that period, Bakhtin points out, carnival played a central symbolic role in the life of the community. Significantly, carnival meant more than a temporary break from productive labor, it chiefly represented an alternative universe characterized by the ludic undermining of all norms. Stam relates that, "the carnivalesque principle abolishes hierarchies, levels social classes, and creates another life free from conventional rules and restrictions." During carnival, all that is socially marginalized and excluded including "the mad, the scandalous, the aleatory," assumes center-stage in a liberatory celebration of otherness. Bakhtin's "body principle" related to the material body includes such bodily functions as hunger, thirst, defecation, and copulation literally becomes a corrosive force, and festive laughter enjoys a symbolic victory over death and all that oppresses or restricts (Stam, 1989, pp. 85-88).

Similarly, Fiske relates that if Bakhtin's carnival was characterized by festive laughter, excessiveness (particularly of the body and the bodily functions), offensiveness, and bad taste, television is frequently criticized for these same vices or virtues. He also contends that this carnivalesque-style was initially caused by the collision of two languages, the high and the folk, and that a similar tension exists in television between its official, ideological language (represented by news, public affairs programming), and the vernacular, low language (tabloid news, wrestling, comedies) it also carries and contains, and that may collide repeatedly with its official voice (Fiske, 1987).

Seinfeld, with its absurdist perspective, represents Bakhtin's carnivalesque by taking the small, common matters of everyday social life and raises them into the arena of televisual discourse. Seinfeld also embodies Bakhtin's body principle by elevating the low, materiality of the human body (along with bodily functions) into the forefront of its own narratives. But, as Fiske further relates, commercial television is limited in that it can only refer to certain activities through carefully chosen words rather than aurally or visually as in what William Paul terms the so-called "gross-out" Hollywood comedies (Animal House, Porky's) and horror films (The Exorcist, Carrie) (Fiske, 1987; Paul, 1994). Despite these inherent limitations, previous Seinfeld episodes have featured such taboo or rarely addressed material concerns as constipation, vomiting, urination, masturbation, and exhibitionism. In the episode, "The Pick," Jerry's budding relationship with a beautiful fashion model is abruptly terminated when she unintentionally sees him "appear" to pick his nose during a traffic stop. Despite Jerry's relentless pleading that he was merely scratching his nose, the model remains thoroughly disgusted with his social impropriety and no longer wants to see him. Jerry, comically portraying the oppressive nature of the material to the social, defiantly yells out to her and the world a variation of The Elephant Man's (John Merrick) dramatic declaration that he is not an animal but a human being. While the stage play of Merrick's life and this Seinfeld episode clearly rest on opposing dramatic poles (the tragic and the comic), nevertheless they both interrelate to the discursive collision of the material body and the social world.

Similarly, in another episode, George is seen urinating in the gym shower room by a fellow member who threatens to inform the management and oust him from the athletic club. While Jerry and Elaine are openly disgusted with George's story of how the member overreacted to his innocent, bodily function, George bluntly exclaims to them that, "it all goes down the same drain hole." In order to salvage his club membership George persuades Elaine (who is attracted to the member who saw George's social impropriety) to convince the member to not report him to the club management. But when Elaine discovers that the member is actually attracted to another woman, she threatens to report him for not wiping his sweat from the exercise equipment if he goes ahead and turns in George for his indiscretion. While this episode features the timeless moral issues of jealousy, love, and betrayal, it also relates such material concerns as one bodily function literally canceling out another.

In "The Contest," Seinfeld's most audacious episode, Jerry, George, Elaine and Kramer enter into an unusual wager to determine who can refrain from practicing masturbation for the longest period of time. Almost from the outset, Kramer, unable to control his own innate impulses for even a brief period of time, quickly withdraws himself from the contest paying off his gambling debt. The winner of this competition will be declared either the "Master" or "Queen"of their domain. In effect, true to the inversive nature of the carnivalesque, the contest not only elevates sexual functions or the "lower body stratum" to a higher discursive level, but also parodies existing social hierarchies by making the declared winner a royal member. This episode's (as well as others) recurring discourse concerning the individual importance of self-control over human impulses, relates to Elias's ideas that a socially permissive society requires even further measures of "internalized" self-controls in its social members.

As previously mentioned, Kramer is a character whose innate appetites and impulses frequently override the tenets of accepted social manners. On a physical level, Kramer, with his exaggerated facial expressions, frizzled hair style, out-of-date fashion wear, and spastic body movements, appropriates Bakhtin's conception of the non-classical "grotesque" (or simply, the material body) body form. The classical body is a refined, orifice-less, laminated surfaced form, and is related to the same discursive forms of official high culture which legitimate their authority by referencing the inherent values found within the classical body form. Bakhtin relates that the creation of the classical body and the formation of a new bodily canon have their inception in the sixteenth century rise of individualism and the combined formation of bourgeois subjectivity and political hegemony which set up the representational struggle of the classical and grotesque concepts. Invariably, the formation of Bakhtin's classical body parallels Elias's social and affective transformation of the individual psyche towards greater levels of sensitivity and refinement (Kipnis, 1992).

In Seinfeld, Kramer's physical body is often represented as an unpredictable, uncontrollable, erupting force that threatens to invade the surfaces of social decorum. For example, for over two episodes, Kramer's contentious bout with constipation compels him to undertake practically every known medical remedy to relieve his discomfort. Kramer's physical condition forces him to constantly intervene into the episodes' central narrative of Jerry and George selling their TV pilot concept to NBC-TV executives. When Kramer's intense bodily condition is finally relieved, his joyful cry is so forceful it can be heard over the bustle of the city, stirring even the pigeons in Central Park.

Likewise, in "The Gymnast," Kramer's painful kidney stone attacks literally sends him convulsing throughout most of the episode. Kramer, at the precise moment his kidney stone is passing, lets out a blood-curdingly scream that not only interrupts a crowd enjoying the circus, but causes a high-wire male performer to fall from his balanced position. As a result, the female gymnast's dire concern for the fallen performer (initiated by Kramer's actions), leads to her confession to Jerry that she was disappointed in his carnal performance as a "comedian." As with other Seinfeld episodes, Kramer's spasmodic physicality serves as a carnivalesque reminder that human materiality can not be completely repressed by the prevailing dictates of American civility.

Overall, beyond examining the discursive relationship between the influential TV series, Seinfeld and contemporary American civility, this paper has implicitly sought to demonstrate the social significance of exploring the social relations of popular cultural texts and American society. While this study has primarily focused on Seinfeld and the nature of existing social manners, the program should also be critically investigated for its representations of gender, race, ethnicity, social class and the overriding dynamics of power. Ultimately, this study has attempted to illustrate that even within the flexible, postmodern state of American civility, individuals like Jerry and his friends must still contend with keeping up appearances.

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Spokesperson as Agenda Builder:

Framing the Susan Smith Investigation

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Abstract

Spokesperson as Agenda Builder: Framing the Susan Smith Investigation

This paper analyzes the thematic frames used by Sheriff Howard Wells, the main police spokesman in the Susan Smith investigation. Three overlapping frames served to build the media coverage of the nine day investigation, keeping the focus of the media on efforts to achieve the safe return of the two missing children, and downplaying suspicions of Smith while police conducted parallel investigations. Wells' characteristics as a successful source, and his use of strategic ambiguity in his statements are also noted.

As most Americans, and much of the developed world, can tell you, the story began with a frantic 911 call from a young mother claiming she had been carjacked. Susan Vaughn Smith, of Union, South Carolina, reported that a black man with a gun had forced his way into the passenger side of her car when she stopped at a red light. Smith claimed the man made her drive a few miles from Union to Lake John D. Long, and then forced her from her car. He would not let her get her two children, Michael, 3, and Alexander, 14 months, who were strapped in car seats in the back of the 1990 Mazda Protege. The man drove off with the children after saying he wouldn't hurt them. Smith then ran to a nearby house and placed the 911 call. It was the night of October 25, 1994.

So began a gothic mystery that would grip the nation for the nine days of the investigation into the alleged kidnapping, and again the following summer as Susan Smith was tried, and sentenced to life in prison, for the murder of her two children. During the initial police investigation of Smith's claims, and the search for the two missing children, Union County Sheriff Howard Wells, and spokespersons for the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, held a veritable stranglehold on any information relating to the case and the investigation. The media covering the case were almost totally dependent on the spokespersons for their daily stories.

This study analyzes how the police spokespersons framed the information they presented to the media. It then illustrates how this verbal frame served to build the media's agenda in its coverage of the investigation, and thus focus the media's, and ultimately the nation's, attention on the facts and information the spokespersons wanted to highlight, while directing attention away from aspects of the case they didn't want in the forefront.

Agenda Setting as a Model

An agenda, according to Rogers and Dearing (1988), is a compilation of issues or events, viewed at a point in time and ranked in importance. The press, "in the process of transmitting others' concerns and issues. . . reworks and translates [those concerns and issues] to focus attention and structure cognitions"(Shaw & McCombs, 1977). From the array of available information, the media select for dissemination those pieces of information media reporters and editors think are important. What the media report as news is the media's agenda of salient information, what the media think their audiences should know. "The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about"(Cohen, 1963, p. 13).

While the media are not the only influence on our sense of what's important in our environment, they do play a central role. But the world the public sees through the media's eyes is not an objective account of events, people, places and issues. "The activities and issues the media cover and include in their content make up the media's agenda on what the public should think about. This agenda is a constructed reality, not necessarily a mirror image of what really exists or is 'true'" (Turk & Franklin, p. 30).

If the media does indeed pass along its construction of reality, its own agenda of what is important, the question of who sets the media's agenda becomes equally important. News sources and organizational spokespersons are a main source of the information on which journalists rely. "News is not necessarily what happens but what a news source says has happened because the news doesn't 'happen' until there is an exchange of information" between journalists and their sources (Turk, 1985, p. 48). The statement that news is "what a news source says has happened" brings us to a discussion of how that source frames the information he or she releases to the news media.

Framing the Media Agenda

Erving Goffman defines a frame as a "schemata of interpretation" through which individuals organize and make sense of information or an occurence (1974, p. 21). "(F)rames select and call attention to particular aspects of the reality described, which logically means that frames simultaneously direct attention away from other aspects"(Entman, 1993, p. 54).

A frame can be further viewed as a "central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143) to the events related to a story or issue, as happened in the coverage of the investigation of the Susan Smith case. Those looking for such frames can identify them through the use of five common devices: catchphrases, depictions, metaphors, examplars and visual images (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

From the media's perspective, frames allow journalists to work with large amounts of information quickly, assign that information to its place in the scheme of the story, and package it for the audience so that they too see where the information fits into the issue (Gitlin, 1980). Media framing thus takes into account not just the topic, but how the journalist or media in general cover and package an issue. By focusing attention on the language and defining the issue under consideration, "framing goes well beyond the traditional agenda-setting model, which tends to take issues as givens" (Kosicki, 1993, p. 113). Media can also affect the way issues are framed through the choices of journalists who cover a story, and those who may be chosen as sources (Kosicki & Pan, 1996).

While previous research has focused on the media's framing of events and issues, this study goes one step further by proposing that sources also contribute to the framing of a story as presented in the media by highlighting and withholding information about a subject or issue from those covering the story. Pan and Kosicki state that framing may be considered a"strategy of constructing and processing news discourse or as a characteristic of the discourse itself" (1993, p. 57), and this analysis looks at framing as a way a source, through careful structuring of the message, can build the media's coverage of the event. By controlling the information released to the media, the investigators in the Susan Smith case in effect controlled the information presented as salient by the media, and by their words framed the situation as they wanted it to be perceived.

Sources and Agenda Building

The idea that the police spokesmen could have framed the issues involved in an investigation is not a new one. Official sources, such as government officials or police, are often preferred and relied upon by journalists (Palentz & Entman, 1981; Gandy, 1982; Fishman, 1980). Literature concerning sources depicts them as "savvy officials who dominate the agenda-building process by conforming their information to the media's needs"(Berkowitz, 1987, p. 509). "Indeed, news can be considered a product of one bureaucracy gathered from other bureaucracies . . . In addition to just having their news regulated by sources, journalists have information structured for them by other bureaucracies. . ."(Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p. 110-111), in this case, the police agencies involved in the investigation.

"[I[t is not quite accurate to speak of the press *setting* agendas if it is mainly passing on the priorities set by other actors and instutions in society." (Weaver & Elliott, 1985, p. 86). This instead is considered a process of *building* the media's agenda by those who frame issues and information for the media. Researchers have investigated four distinct agendas in the agenda-setting process -- source agenda, media agenda, audience agenda and policy agenda. In order to describe agenda setting effects it is necessary to find the origin or locus of agenda setting (Megwa & Brenner, 1988). An emphasis on the origins of issues covered by the media, and the term "agenda-building" comes from political scientists such as Cobb and Elder (1972) who focused on how subjects of news coverage become issues. This agenda-building approach is more concerned with how issues originate, or how subjects of new coverage become issues, than with the media-audience relationship (Weaver & Elliott, 1985).

A common strategy of the deadline-driven journalist is to rely on source-originated news such as the daily news conferences held by police officials investigating the case, especially when additional information is difficult to find. As was the situation during the Susan Smith investigation, where police personnel held twice daily media briefings at a central location, sources may intentionally shape the news agenda by "subsidizing" journalists' costs of gathering and reporting information, as well as making the news easier to cover, in order to increase their chances of being covered (Gandy, 1982; Berkowitz and Adams, 1990). Journalists, trying to make their information gathering efficient, tend to gravitate to official representatives because they make information readily available.

Shoemaker and Reese write that"(s)ources have a tremendous effect on mass media content, because journalists can't include in their news reports what they don't know. . . (sources) may also influence the news in subtle ways by providing the context within which all other information is evaluated... and by monopolizing the journalists' time so that they don't have an opportunity to seek out sources with alternative views"(1991, p. 150). This was a strategy also employed by the law enforcement personnel involved in the Smith investigation. Accessibility and quotability both have an affect on a particular source's prominence and dominance in news coverage (Stempel and Culbertson, 1984) and law enforcement personnel made sure they fulfilled both criteria.

Media also use a limited number of sources because of the need to confirm their work with others, but by relying on a common and often narrow network of sources the media contribute to a "systematic convergence on the conventional wisdom," or largely unquestioned consensus views (Reese, Grant & Danielian, 1994 p. 85). Of course journalists "not only talk with those who are directly involved (in news events), but they may also get information from sources only indirectly associated with the event or reactions and opinions from 'people on the street.' But not all sources are equally likely to be contacted by journalists -- those with economic or political power are more likely to influence news reports than those who lack power"(Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p. 151). Official spokespersons have the weight of authority behind them, while other sources develop other resources of value to the media such as specialized expertise (Reese, 1991). Additionally, "[w]orking with the media requires a high level of skill in information presentation and the ability to fit one's message into media news values and time frame" (Kosicki & Pan, 1996, p. 6). In the investigation of the Susan Smith case, Sheriff Howard Wells, the main spokesman, had all of these.

Method and Sources

A frame analysis was conducted on the content of the police spokesmen's statements as reported by the media. The frame analysis empirically tracks key words, phrases and themes which serve to highlight specific facts while obscuring others. The results of this analysis were then compared to a reconstruction of the police case file, including unpublished investigation information regarding the case and other documentary evidence which was not available until the trial ended.

This process of comparing the frame provided to the media by police personnel during the investigation, to the information provided by the reconstruction of the actual case file, offers a means of tracking the specific ways that the police spokesmen used language to influence the development of the media frame and, ultimately, the media's agenda (Entman, 1993).

The unit of analysis for this study is the quote or paraphrase issued by the law enforcement personnel who acted as spokesmen during the investigation. This analysis excludes reporters' analysis of those statements and commonly known information. The analysis itself is based on how the quotes fit together to create the media frame. That frame is then compared to the actual events that took place in order to see how the police spokesmen built the media's agenda of coverage for this case.[1]

The body of coverage for this study is composed of 205 newspaper articles published within the state of South Carolina and the southeast region from October 26 to November 5, 1994. Articles published during this time period were chosen because these dates encompass the time frame of coverage of the event. Researchers used newspapers within South Carolina and the region because they contained the heaviest overall coverage of the case. The newspapers include 21 dailies and 10 weeklies (See Table 1).

The coverage consists of a mixture of morning and afternoon papers, with most of the coverage coming from morning papers. Since morning papers generally cover the events of the preceding day, the researchers adjusted for this lag in their analysis and discussion of day by day coverage. The adjustment for time of day can be seen in the dated citations within the storyline.

While television news broadcasts and talk shows offered intense coverage of the investigation that was similar in content and scope to the print coverage, and was reviewed as background for this study, the regional print media were the primary sources. The newspaper body of coverage also included feature articles, editorials and commentary, but because they did not focus directly on the investigation these were not coded by the researchers.

Everything that can be done is being done

From the beginning of the investigation, police personnel followed traditional, "by-the-book" investigative techniques, taking all possibilities into consideration. In the PBS Media Matters documentary on Susan Smith, which appeared eight months after the arrest, the main police spokesman, Sheriff Howard Wells of Union said, "Early on, we took information as it was given. We tried to formulate a plan through the media's assistance that would saturate our immediate area, with pictures of that car, pictures of those children, just factual knowledge that we had early on, so that if someone did know something helpful, we could get that back and formulate it into our plan and find out which way to go" (6/28/95).

Initial reports of the incident, covering October 26 through October 28, or Days One through Three of the investigation, were framed by the spokespersons as a carjacking and a kidnapping. The investigators' statements as reported in the media were characterized as upbeat and optimistic, and the reports from Sheriff Wells emphasized the broad and wide-ranging efforts that were being made to catch the suspect and find the children. On Day One of the investigation Wells asked the local community for help with the plea, "If anyone saw a suspect matching this description [in the area in which Smith claimed the abduction took place] please give us a call" (The Union Daily Times, 10/26/94).

Other quotes from Wells reported during the initial period of the investigation focused on optimism for a speedy and positive conclusion, "We hope we can resolve this quickly with the children being recovered safely"(The Union Daily Times, 10/26/94), and the amount of police coverage the investigation was getting, "The highway patrol has been alerted, all the roads are covered. Officers are patrolling the back roads. There are more SLED [South Carolina Law Enforcement Division] people here than I have ever seen in Union County and they have given great assistance"(The Union Daily Times, 10/26/94).[2] Not relying on just a local search for the missing car and children, "The description has been sent nationwide," Wells told reporters (The Greenville Piedmont, 10/27/94).

Wells also asserted that "Everything that can be done is being done" (The Union Daily Times, 10/27/94). "We are following up on leads, developing suspects and ruling them out"(The Union Daily Times, 10/27/94). Union Sheriff's Captain Roger Gregory reported there were more than 60 officers searching the roads and towns in Union and adjacent counties (Florence Morning News, AP report, 10/27/94).

"I've had offers of manpower from Chester and Laurens (counties), and Cherokee County has offered flyovers and airpower," Wells told The Union Daily Times (10/27/94). The Greenville Piedmont reported that, according to Wells, state and federal officers were meeting to review the investigation and make sure nothing had been overlooked (10/27/94). The FBI was involved in the case because carjacking is a federal offense.

Wells also told reporters information about the abduction was given to a national police computer network shortly after the children were taken from their mother (The [Spartanburg] Herald-Journal, 10/28/94). Through the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, photos of the Smith children, the car, and the composite sketch of the suspect were distributed(The Charlotte Observer, 10/28/94). More than 1,000 calls from across the country were received after descriptions of the car and suspect were sent out (Union Daily Times, 10/28/94).

In keeping with the initial "doing all we can" framing of the investigation, Hugh Munn, SLED spokesman, reported the State Law Enforcement Division sent four helicopters for the search Wednesday [Day One] and had three flying Thursday [Day Two] (The [Columbia] State, 10/28/94).

The children are our main concern

While the focus of the entire investigation was on recovering the children, the researchers identified a second theme that developed in the spokesmen's framing of the case for the media. The media coverage shows that several days into the investigation law enforcement officials shifted their own focus, and the media's, to a primary goal of finding the children, rather than their alleged abductor. During this period of transition the words used by the spokesmen, and the actions of the investigators, focused less on the abductor as a stranger and carjacker and more on the return of the children themselves.

In fact The [Columbia] State reported on Day Five of the investigation that Wells "declined to issue a new sketch of the suspect, even though missing person specialists have offered to produce one" (10/30/94). Justification for the investigators' decision to focus on the children came from Hugh Munn, the SLED spokesman, who noted very early "we can't even find a crime that occurred in that vicinity that would require someone to take a car" (The Charlotte Observer, 10/28/94).

Sheriff Wells was variously quoted as saying: "We're doing what we can to recover these children. They are our main concern"(Greenville Piedmont, AP report, 10/27/94); "We want to get the children back as soon as we can, as safely as we can" (The Union Daily Times, 10/27/94); "Our focus right now is to get these children back to their mother as soon and as safely as possible"(The Greenville

News, 10/28/94); and "Our primary goal is getting the children back" (Spartanburg Herald-Journal, 10/29/94).

A statement that Wells made on Day Four of the investigation puts this frame in the clearest perspective: "We want to locate them as soon as we can, while they are still healthy and in good shape and get them back home to their parents if at all possible. Afterwards then we can focus on the crime itself" (The Greenville News, 10/29/94). The separation of the victims from the alleged "crime," while not nullifying that the police were doing all they could, shows first an overlapping of themes -- focusing on the children while still searching for the kidnapper -- and eventually a shift away from the crime as a "carjacking" into an "abduction" with many possible causes.

The frame of "the children are our main concern" evolved from action to hope over the nine-day period of the investigation. Wells was quoted by the Charleston Post & Courier as saying "We're still waiting on that call that will tell us where the children are located" (10/28/94).

That call appeared to come when Wells received a tip, quickly proved unfounded, that one of the Smith brothers, 14-month-old Alex, might have been found abandoned in Seattle, Washington. The child's mother was later located. Wells reacted to the tip by immediately informing the media of the break, instead of waiting to confirm the information. During a personal interview with one of the researchers, Hugh Munn said that he and SLED chief Robert Stewart had no idea about "the Seattle thing" until they heard it on the news themselves. "It was only from [Wells'] exuberance and just hoping" that he released the information without fully checking it. "It looked like a good break and he didn't wait like he normally would to see if this was going to check out. And it did not check out" (personal interview, 1/22/97).

"It is a very promising lead right now," the sheriff told reporters at the time. "It could provide us with the break we've needed" (The Beaufort Gazette, AP report, 11/3/94).

"It almost looked like a dream too good to come true" Wells was reported to have said in The [Columbia] State (11/3/94) after receiving word the child was not Alex Smith. "I was hoping that was the one we had been waiting on so long, and that it was going to give us our direction and give us some breathing room that the children were OK and that we could possibly get them and bring them back home" (The Greenville News, 11/3/94). "It's very hard when you get your hopes up and see them dashed" (The [Sumter] Item, 11/2/94).

No one is more of a suspect than anybody else

During the second half of the investigation, law enforcement personnel were suspicious of Susan Smith because of the number of inconsistencies in her story. Although they were not positive of her connection to the children's disappearance, they believed she knew more than she was telling. They also were concerned about her state of mind. "We searched by ground, by air, by water, but we had come up with nothing. We had a very unstable suspect, if you could call her a suspect. All we knew was she knew something, but we also knew if she called an attorney it was over. We'd still be looking for those children today" (Hugh Munn, personal interview, 1/22/97).

However,spokespersons developed a verbal frame to give the media the impression they weren't focusing on one person but instead on all possibilities, fearing that the media agenda was starting to point prematurely toward Susan Smith. This fear was confirmed by a reporter who covered the case:

> "I think that because we knew there were inconsistencies in her story, with the reporters sense of digging, and getting more -- we knew something was

> there that wasn't right, which immediately made her become a suspect. And then you watch her -- and if you go back now just as a citizen and watch the TV interviews, you can pick up on things. I think we were all picking up on something that was not quite right with her. None of us knew what it was" (April Moorefield, reporter for The Greenville News, personal interview, 1/31/97).

In his attempt to keep the media focus off Smith during the latter stages of the investigation, Wells resorted to repeatedly explaining to the media why she had been questioned several times. "We've had questions about her story, that's why we've talked to her more than one time. There were differences...on detail," Wells is reported to have said (The Charlotte Observer, 10/29/94).

In an AP story Wells was quoted as saying, "We are interviewing family members, looking for a revenge motive [Susan Smith was separated from her husband David], but so far it looks like a random act" (10/28/94). Looking at family members is a normal part of any investigation, Munn explained (AP, 10/28/94). "We're trying to corroborate her story because not only is she the victim in this case, but the public is trying to make her the suspect," Wells said (The [Columbia] State, 10/30/94).

Wells said he had no immediate plans to question Smith again and cautioned against focusing on any one individual. "You have to be aware of public speculation and allegations. Persons automatically assume things when an investigation goes this long. Naturally people are going to speculate" (The [Myrtle Beach] Sun News, AP Report, 10/30/94).

Throughout the investigation Wells also repeatedly refused to answer any reporters' questions about Smith taking a polygraph, and later refused to confirm that she had failed one, even though information to that effect had been leaked to the media.

Even toward the end of investigation Wells was quoted as saying, "We haven't ruled out any possibilities, but we are still treating this as an abduction. We will continue to question family members, neighbors, anything it takes to bring this case to a close. We have not ruled out anybody yet, but we have not focused on any person" (Union Daily Times, 10/31/94).

Finally, an interesting aspect of this frame was the talk of a reward that was never actually offered. Wells repeatedly mentioned the possibility of offering a reward of up to $50,000, calling it "a card we haven't played yet" (Union Daily Times, 10/31/94). Wells claimed the reason he didn't want to offer a reward was because investigators wanted someone to come forward with information about the children of their own volition, and not because of a monetary reward. Wells said the motivation for giving information should be "the good will of the person" (The [Columbia] State, 10/31/94).

The use of a reward that was alluded to but never actually offered was an interesting verbal strategy by Wells. Offering a reward would lend credence to his statements that "no one is more of a suspect than anyone else" because why would police offer a sizeable reward for information if they didn't need that information? Yet, since the reward was not offered, it would appear investigators felt they didn't need whatever information the reward would bring forth. The dangling of the possibility of a reward, then, can be seen as either a carrot or a stick -- it could serve to draw out additional information from those who wanted to show their "good will" or it might act as a threat to the perpetrator of the crime, that if the reward was offered she or he would be unmasked by someone who found $50,000 of more importance than that person's life. For someone of Susan Smith's volatile mental state, this strategy might be effective.

Control of information

In working to frame the case, and thus build the media's agenda in relation to it, the spokesmen withheld information that has since come out both about the investigation and their suspicions of Susan Smith. By controlling the release of information they focused media attention in the directions they wished it to be focused, and away from areas they wanted to obscure.

On the PBS Media Matters documentary covering the Susan Smith investigation, Gary Henderson, a reporter with the Spartanburg Herald Journal said "We had basically two sources, Susan Smith and what we were told at briefings. So it was some very difficult reporting" (6/28/95). Sheriff Wells was only doing two press briefings a day, one in the morning and one in the late afternoon. Aside from that he was working on the investigation and not available to reporters.

To reporters' frustration "Wells remained mum on some details of the case. For example he declined comment on where Mrs. Smith was between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. on the day of the incident. But he did say the children were last seen by several different people about 6 p.m. Tuesday. 'Probably Mrs. Smith and the children were together between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.,' he said" (Greenville News, 11/1/94).

It wasn't until Day Seven of the investigation that Wells admitted he, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and the FBI were conducting what he termed parallel investigations -- one focusing on a random carjacking and another looking at any other possibility. "I cannot rule out anything. I have to be open to all allegations. We have looked at any possible motivations for the abduction" Wells was reported to have said (Greenville News, 11/2/94). As Cliff LeBlanc of The State newspaper in Columbia would later realize, "What that meant at the time is 'we're not dismissing the family's role in this. We have to check everything' [but] I think the media accepted it as sort of a descriptive phrase he was using, when in fact he was telling us where the investigation was going" (Media Matters, 6/28/95).

Also on Day Seven divers searched a canal just a few miles from John D. Long Lake but found nothing. Wells told reporters the search was just to rule out that the car was there, and the next day The Spartanburg Herald Journal reported that after the daily news conference Wells said his department was emphasizing water searches because almost every tip provided by people who had reported visions or dreams involved water. But as reported in the book, Nine Days in Union, reporters were already beginning to be suspicious of the scattered searches: "Bonner [my photographer] and I believed this search and possibly others may have been conducted to give the investigators at the courthouse a little room to operate unnoticed" (Henderson, 1995, p. 42).

In fact, this did prove to be the case. A state highway engineer tipped investigators to the fact the light at the intersection where Smith reported the carjacking occurred stayed red unless another car approached [Smith had reported the intersection was deserted]. Investigators checked and found this to be true. A SLED investigator brought Smith to the intersection that afternoon and asked her to reenact the carjacking step by step. The following day he confronted her with the fact her story couldn't be true. She admitted it wasn't, and said the incident had actually occurred 13 miles away in another town. She said she had lied because she wasn't supposed to be in that area.

That same afternoon investigators searched Susan Smith's house and removed several bags of materials as evidence, although Wells would tell reporters "I have no comment on what we did yesterday or what we're going to do today" ([Greenwood] Index Journal, 11/3/94 -- from the AP).

Reporter Henry Eichel of the Charlotte Observer told one of the researchers he had learned that after discovering Smith's lie about the site of the alleged carjacking, SLED Chief Robert Stewart wanted her arrested immediately, if only for filing a false report. Stewart felt that the publicity of exposing her lie might cause her to break and confess. Wells cautioned against it, expressing the belief that if Smith retained an attorney they would never find the children. Stewart agreed to wait one more day (personal interview, 2/3/97).

Wells' use of Strategic Ambiguity

Toward the end of the investigation, during the period that police were increasingly suspicious of Smith, Sheriff Wells showed a sophisticated understanding of the use of ambiguous language as a strategy to report the status of the investigation and to answer reporters' questions. Most commonly recognized as a strategy within organizations to orient toward multiple goals (Eisenberg, 1984), strategic ambiguity served Wells' purpose of not actually lying to the media, or being forced to refuse to answer questions, yet not clearly stating what was really happening in the case.

Wells' quote above where he told reporters "*Probably* Mrs. Smith and the children were together between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m" (Greenville News, 11/1/94) is a good example of this ambiguity, as is the quote from Day Eight of the investigation, when police had finally focused all their attention on Susan Smith. Wells told reporters,"*I cannot rule out anything*. I have to be open to all allegations" (Greenville News, 11/2/94). Another article on Day Eight reported Wells as saying investigators might resort to a *"different kind of search" today, though he would not be specific*(The [Columbia] State, 11/2/94). When asked about doing a door-to-door search Wells replied, "That's something we may get to yet" (Greenville News, 11/1/94). He also noted that Mitch Sinclair, the family friend Susan Smith was allegedly going to see when she reported the carjacking, was *"no more of a suspect than anyone else"* (Spartanburg Herald Journal, 11/2/94). And members of Smith's family, who were repeatedly questioned *"did not shed any clear light"* on the investigation, according to Wells (Greenville News, 10/31/94).

Wells' strategic use of ambiguous language, as well as his refusal to confirm the outcome of Smith's polygraphs, and his repeated assertion that Smith was under no more suspicion than anyone else, served to cloud the issues involved, and made it more difficult for the reporters covering the case. This allowed the police some breathing room away from media attention in which to conduct the parallel investigation. It was the second investigation, not revealed to the media, and thus not covered them, in which Susan Smith was a prime suspect.

Building the Media Agenda

Police spokesmen, especially Sheriff Howard Wells, used three overlapping verbal themes, or storylines, to frame the investigation of the Susan Smith case. While "the children are our main concern" was the overall theme used by the police to frame this story for the media, two other themes became part of our overall understanding of the case.

The beginning of the investigation was marked by repetition of the mantra: "everything that can be done is being done" in order to calm a small town -- Union -- and small state -- South Carolina -- where the idea of a random carjacking and the abduction of two small children had frightened many citizens. Looking back at the media coverage of the first days of the investigation, readers can easily see from the scanty coverage of the incident that at first the media considered this crime not important enough to cover. Readers of this analysis will note that only the local Union paper carried any coverage of the incident on the first day of the investigation. It took until the second day to build media interest to the point that other newspapers started covering the investigation, and sending their own reporters instead of relying on Associated Press reports.

After the first few days of the investigation, Wells and the other spokesmen overlapped the first frame with "the children are our main concern," effectively shifting media attention away from the search for a stranger, a carjacker, a kidnapper, and onto two small children whom a whole town knew and loved. In a personal interview (2/3/97) Henry Eichel of The Charlotte Observer said "the photo of two beautiful children" that Wells distributed to the media was a visual cue that helped Wells keep media attention on the case. Added to Wells' thematic frame of finding the children above all else, and information about the steps police were taking to that end, the kidnapper became a topic only important enough for the final paragraphs of a newspaper story, if he was mentioned at all.

The final frame, "no one is more of a suspect than anybody else," became more prominent as the investigation continued, and reporters' questions started to focus more and more on Susan Smith. Some investigators themselves were becoming anxious to wrap up the case by, at the least, arresting Smith as the most likely suspect. The FBI personnel on the case are believed to have leaked Smith's polygraph results to the media, and SLED Chief Stewart wanted to arrest her, if only on a minimum charge of filing a false report.

With pressure mounting, Wells continued to hold firm, believing that a premature arrest might cause the most harm. "When the press starts getting a little restless and doing their own investigation, and when you release information beforehand . . . my greatest fear is the damage that possibly can be done to the investigation or stages of a case like this. When something's reported too soon, without any sensitivity to the individuals or the investigation, you can't go back and recover that," Wells said on Media Matters, a PBS documentary about the Susan Smith investigation (6/28/95).

Wells' intuition proved correct in not pushing the case to an unnatural conclusion, and Smith confessed on November 3, 1994. Up until he reported the confession to the media at his evening news conference, Wells continued to claim that "no one is any more a suspect than anyone else."

Conclusions

While it might be tempting to believe that any organizational spokesperson can affect media coverage of an event in the same way Wells did, this is usually not the case. As a spokesman Wells embodied all the media look for in a source: as an official source he carried the weight of authority, as a working Sheriff he held the power of expertise; he actively subsidized the reporters' efforts to gather news by holding twice daily news conferences that fit into the media deadlines; he had a high level of skill in information presentation and the ability to fit his message into media news values; he was both accessible and quotable thus having an impact on his prominence and dominance in news coverage; and he provided the context within which all other information reporters were able to gather was evaluated. He was, in sum, one of those "savvy officials who dominate the agenda-building process by conforming their information to the media's needs"(Berkowitz, 1987, p. 509). To add to his cachet, he had a personal relationship with the family involved -- he was a friend of Smith's stepfather, and godfather to her nephew -- and was a long-time resident of Union.

The Smith investigation itself was different from other police cases in the total "lock" the investigators held on information relating to the case. Aside from interviewing local residents, reporters had little else on which to base their reports. As April Moorefield of the Greenville News explained:

> "(Y)ou have to realize with all the media that have come to Union, you had a good deal of local upstate media, who had a good deal of sources withing the community, and within the police community statewide. So they were drawing on them. But these were non-sources who weren't willing to go on the record, who were telling us things that we could never get confirmed. Wells would not confirm, the FBI people who were there would not confirm, Hugh Munn would not confirm.
>
> "[We tried to get people to talk] . . . but they didn't have the authority to talk either. And the people who were talking, were long time sources of ours, who we knew we couldn't break that confidentiality. And it was nothing solid, on the record, for print, this is it. It was "you need to check this out, what's going on, you need to check this" "have you heard this?" that kind of thing" (personal interview, 1/31/97).

By controlling the information released to the media, the investigators in the Susan Smith case in effect controlled the information presented as salient by the media, and by their words framed the situation as they wanted it to be perceived. As discussed earlier police also, through their use of scattered searches, controlled a great deal of reporters' time, and thus their ability to develop other sources.

Media have the potential to help or hinder an investigation depending on the part they play. As we all know, analysts believe the media involvement in the O.J. Simpson case contributed to its outcome. In this case investigators chose to "involve" the media as active participants in solving the case. In addition to disseminating information about the alleged crime, criminal, and missing children media coverage kept the case before the state and the country until its sad conclusion. In addition, by carefully framing the issues presented to the media Wells ensured the media's agenda matched his as closely as possible.

In an interview conducted after the close of the investigation Wells graciously gives credit to media coverage for solving the case. "I am not going to elaborate on the confession, but I will say right now that I think the press attention to this case was beneficial; that in the absence of knowing if the car was in Union County the national attention and the intense pressure and scrutiny placed on [the investigation] by the media probably had a great deal to do with the case being broken" (Media Matters, 6/28/95).

Ultimately, however, it was the careful framing of issues in the investigation that built the media coverage Wells credits. By keeping the focus on the children and away from Susan Smith as prime suspect, the verbal frame allowed investigators the freedom to bring the case to a natural, and undeniable, conclusion.

Endnotes

1. After the newspaper analysis was completed the researchers interviewed Hugh Munn, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) spokesman, as well as Henry Eichel of the Charlotte Observer and April Moorefield of the Greenville News, both reporters who covered the investigation. The PBS documentary Media Matters, which included interviews with numerous reporters and law enforcement personnel was also transcribed and used in the analysis. A great deal of information that reporters did not know during the investigation came out after the initial event, but prior to Smith's trial. This information was also used in reconstructing the investigation as it actually took place.

2. The Union Daily Times, which is published in the afternoon, was the only newspaper to report on the alleged carjacking and abduction on Day One of the investigation.

Table 1

Newspaper	City	Frequency
Aiken Standard (afternoon)	Aiken, SC	Daily-p.m
Anderson Independent Mail	Anderson, SC	Daily-a.m.
Atlanta Constitution	Atlanta, GA	Daily-a.m.
Augusta Chronicle	Augusta, GA	Daily-a.m.
Beaufort Gazette	Beaufort, SC	Daily-a.m.
Charlotte Observer	Charlotte, NC	Daily-a.m.
Cherokee Chronicle	Gaffney, SC	Weekly
Florence Morning News	Florence, SC	Daily-a.m.
The Gaffney Ledger	Gaffney, SC	Weekly
The Gamecock, Univ. of South Carolina	Columbia, SC	Weekly
Greenville News	Greenville, SC	Daily-a.m.
Greenville Piedmont	Greenville, SC	Daily-a.m.
Greenwood Index-Journal	Greenwood, SC	Daily-p.m.
The Herald-Journal	Spartanburg, SC	Daily-a.m.
Island Packet	Hilton Head, SC	Daily-a.m.
Knoxville News Sentinel	Knoxville, TN	Daily-a.m.
Lancaster News	Lancaster, SC	Weekly
The Messenger	Clemson, SC	Weekly
Methodist Advocate	Columbia, SC	Weekly
The News & Reporter	Chester, SC	Weekly
The News Leader	Landrum, SC	Weekly
Post & Courier	Charleston, SC	Daily-a.m.
Rock Hill Herald	Rock Hill, SC	Daily-a.m.
Savannah Morning News	Savannah, GA	Daily-a.m.
Savannah News Press	Savannah, GA	Weekly
The State	Columbia, SC	Daily-a.m.
The Sumter Item (afternoon)	Sumter, SC	Daily-p.m.
The Sun News	Myrtle Beach, SC	Daily-a.m.
The Times & Democrat	Orangeburg, SC	Daily-a.m.
Union Daily Times (afternoon)	Union, SC	Daily-p.m.
The York Observer	York, SC	Weekly

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RETHINKING THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES: THE PURSUIT OF INDIVIDUALISM IN AMERICAN PRIMETIME TELEVISION ADVERTISING

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RETHINKING THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES: THE PURSUIT OF INDIVIDUALISM IN AMERICAN PRIMETIME TELEVISION ADVERTISING

Abstract

A long-standing, unresolved issue concerns whether advertising messages merely reflect existing cultural values or construct new values. To reconsider the issue, this study examined primetime television advertising for expressions of individualism, the most basic cultural value in American society.

Using a document analysis approach, four types of main message strategy and eight contextual categories emerged as elements that express individualism. These expressions showed that advertising portrayals often misrepresent what we know of the culture from census data. Conclusions were offered regarding advertising's ability to construct new values.

INTRODUCTION

The advertising literature of the 1980s shows an interest in one of the "unintended consequences" of advertising -- the transmission of cultural values. Much of this research has concerned two issues: (1) advertising's role in either constructing new values or reflecting existing values within a culture, and (2) the need for a better understanding of cultural values so that creative strategy can accurately depict a given culture, whether it is one's own culture or a target culture for international advertising.

Pollay (1986; 1987) and Holbrook (1987) have addressed the first issue in a philosophical debate concerning the role of advertising in society. Two well articulated but conflicting views emerged with Pollay advancing the "constructionist" role and Holbrook defending the "reflectionist" role; however, the issue has gone unresolved.

The American Association of Advertising Agencies has clearly taken the position that advertising merely reflects existing values. In fact, the organization ran a 1984 campaign which included one ad that specifically addressed the issue by using the headline, "Is Advertising a Reflection of Society? Or Is Society a Reflection of Advertising?" All ads in the series used the tagline "Advertising. Another Word For Freedom Of Choice." After a series of statements in the "reflection" ad, consumers were essentially asked to conclude that "advertising is a mirror of society's tastes. Not vice versa." While the ad used a humorous and entertaining illustration of a woman whose image was reflected on a TV screen, it was criticized for flawed logic that is purposely misleading (Goldman 1992).

Many researchers have addressed the second issue by attempting to identify the cultural values in advertising messages. Significant strides in identifying cultural differences have been made; however, the research has been hindered by disagreement over which values are worthy of investigation, vastly different approaches to the study of values, an underestimation of the complexity of cultural values, and the use of different theoretical frameworks. From 1980 through 1996 the major advertising and marketing journals published 20 content analyses of cultural values in ads. These studies attempted to provide a better understanding of values to create more effective ads but rarely touched on issues associated with the role of advertising in society.

Of these studies, ten examined values within a single country -- one in Poland (Sayre 1994), one in the People's Republic of China (Cheng 1994), and eight within the U.S. (Belk and Pollay 1985a; Belk and Pollay 1985b; Gross and Sheth 1989; Pollay 1983, 1984; Pollay and Gallaher 1990; Zinkhan, Hong, and Lawson 1990; Zinkhan and Shermohamad 1986). The other ten studies examined values cross-culturally. U.S. advertising was compared to that of Brazil (Tansey, Hyman, and Zinkhan 1990), China (Cheng and Schweitzer 1996), Great Britain (Frith and Wesson 1991), Japan (Mueller 1987; Belk and Bryce 1986; Belk and Pollay 1985c), Mexico (McCarty and Hattwick 1992), and Sweden (Wiles, Wiles and Tjernlund 1996). One study compared the advertising of the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Tse, Belk, and Zhou 1989), and another compared values across 11 countries (Albers-Miller and Gelb 1996).

This study examines the expressions of individualism as a cultural value in primetime television advertising and departs from past research in two ways: it uses a different methodology from previous advertising studies of cultural values to identify taken-for-granted elements that can aid advertisers in crafting more effective messages, but more importantly, it offers a different way to evaluate the role of advertising in society through a comparison of advertising portrayals with portrayals from census data.

Of all cultural values, the role of the individual (individualism versus collectivism) has been identified as the most important dimension of cultural differences (Hofstede 1991; Lodge 1975; Triandis 1989) although it has been the main focus of only six of the 20 advertising studies (Albers-Miller and Gelb 1996; Cheng 1994, 1996; Frith and Wesson 1991; McCarty and Hattwick 1992; and Mueller 1987). The political scientist George Lodge defines individualism as the belief that "fulfillment lies in an essentially lonely struggle in what amounts to a wilderness where the fit survive -- and where, if you do not survive, you are somehow unfit" (1975, p. 10). Like all values, individualism is thought to be pervasive and reflected in society's institutions as well as in its cultural products such as novels, films, television programs, popular music, and advertising. Yet the pervasive, taken-for-granted nature of values can make them nearly invisible to the members of a given culture.

This study does not argue the advantages and disadvantages of individualism, for the value is firmly ingrained in U.S. culture. Nor does it examine messages of collectivism since an earlier study (Wolburg and Taylor 1994) found only one example of a collectivistic message in the sample. Instead, the study attempts to explicate the ways in which messages of individualism appear in American network primetime television advertising. It begins with an historical overview, proceeds to an interpretive analysis of advertising content, and concludes with a discussion of advertising's role in constructing cultural values.

The Historical Evolution of an Idea

Individualism is a political idea that has developed after the 15th century. During medieval times each person was equated with his place in the social hierarchy. Any separation from the social roles assigned by God, society, and family was unthinkable (Baumeister 1987). The 16th century marked increased social mobility and the cessation of the fixed social hierarchy which shifted the basic unit in society from the community to the individual, forming the foundation for individualism. The blacksmith's son, for example, was no longer tied to the moral duty to become a blacksmith himself (MacIntyre 1981).

John Locke became England's most prominent spokesman for the religious, political, and economic freedoms of man. All men were regarded as inherently good, endowed with inalienable rights by God, and were of equal privilege in the pursuit of rank. Each man shaped his own destiny. Locke's ideas came to fruition in the U.S. during the fight for independence. The Declaration of Independence states

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

Arensberg and Niehoff (1975) speculate that the driving force for individualism in the U.S. was the commitment to progress, which in turn was derived from westward expansion. It wasn't until 1830 that the word "individualism" was coined by the French philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville, who defined individualism as

> ...a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself. (de Tocqueville 1969).

Hofstede's view of Individualism/Collectivism

Individualism has been extensively examined by Hofstede (1980), who enumerated the many ways in which individualism and collectivism affect family life, occupations, education, and relationships in the workplace (see Table 1). Most collectivist families consist of extended families (parents, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts -- even servants), and a lifetime of loyalty to one's extended family is the only secure protection one has against the hardships of life. Breaking this loyalty is among the most severe offenses a person can commit.

Within individualist societies, everyone is expected to look after themselves and their immediate family while other relatives often live at quite a distance. The nuclear family encourages children to be independent and to leave the parental home once they reach adulthood, and at that point they often reduce their relationships with the parents. Hofstede ranks the U.S. as the most individualistic country in the world.

A popular misconception is that group behavior is evidence of collectivism; however, it is not the presence of a group but the relationship of the individuals within the group that is important. On the surface an athletic team may seem to be a clear example of a collective unity, but within an individualistic culture each individual will not only participate for the good of the team, but will perform at optimum capacity to receive individual recognition. This behavior is reinforced by the running commentary on the performance of specific individuals by sports commentators, the choosing of the most valuable player, and the use of personal names on team uniforms for easy identification of the individual. The fittest go on to professional careers in which they (individually) earn high salaries. In contrast, collectivist groups prize humility and shun individuals who attract too much attention to themselves because their behavior is considered boastful.

METHODOLOGY

Obtaining the sample

A sample of commercials from 14 hours of primetime network television programming (8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. ET) was obtained by taping all programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX on a single night with additional hours from these networks on subsequent nights. Network

TABLE 1
HOFSTEDE'S KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COLLECTIVIST AND INDIVIDUALIST SOCIETIES

Collectivist	Individualist
People are born into extended families or other ingroups which continue to protect them in exchange for loyalty.	Everyone grows up to look after him/herself and his/her immediate (nuclear) family only.
Identity is based in the social network to which one belongs.	Identity is based in the individual.
Children learn to think in terms of 'we.'	Children learn to think in terms of 'I.'
Harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontations avoided.	Speaking one's mind is a characteristic of an honest person.
High-context communication. (Much communication is implicit.)	Low-context communication. (Most communication is explicit.)
Trespassing (infractions of rules) leads to shame and loss of face for self and group.	Trespassing (infractions of rules) leads to guilt and loss of self-respect.
Purpose of education is learning how to do.	Purpose of education is learning how to learn.
Diplomas provide entry to higher status groups.	Diplomas increase economic worth and/or self-respect.
Employer--employee relationship is perceived in moral terms, like a family link.	Employer -- employee relationship is a contract supposed to be based on mutual advantage.
Hiring and promotion decisions take employees' ingroup into account.	Hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on skills and rules only.
Management is management of groups.	Management is management of individuals.
Relationship prevails over task.	Task prevails over relationship.

Hofstede 1991, p. 67

programming was preferred to cable to reach a broader, mass audience, and primetime was chosen because it is the daypart that attracts the largest audience.

The sample was created in order to obtain an adequate number of unduplicated national ads from a representative mix of situation comedies (sitcoms), 2-hour movies, 1-hour dramas, 1-hour news programs, 1-hour reality programs, and 2-hour sports programs. A total of 272 ads were taped, which resulted in 198 national ads after eliminating local advertising and repetitions. Local ads were eliminated since no control over content differences was possible across localities.

As a further check against a possible bias for a disproportionate number of ads within product categories, a comparison of the percentage of ads by product category from the sample was made against the yearly summary percentages of ads by product category from the Television Bureau of Advertising (percentages were converted from dollars). The similarity in figures suggests that the number of ads within each product category in the sample are typical for their respective categories.

The Interpretive Approach

This study deviates from the traditional content analysis by utilizing a qualitative approach through document analysis -- a method underutilized by advertisers -- in hopes of gaining a different level of insight given the complexity of the values.

The appropriateness of ads as qualitative data was discussed by Denzin (1978) who identified mass-media products, such as advertisements, as one of several public records suitable for document analysis. Like other forms of qualitative research, document analysis utilizes the inductive approach, which allows the theory to emerge from the data. A primary benefit from this approach in this study was the identification of various patterns which could not have been discovered otherwise.

One of the limitations of past research is the lack of explanation given for identifying complex values. Individualism and other values are usually defined at high levels of abstraction; yet, an examination of ads for incidence of cultural values requires a knowledge of a given value at the concrete level. The document analysis approach also provided a means for identifying the more concrete elements that are associated with the value at the abstract level.

Using transcripts of the ads in the sample, the two authors applied analytic induction and comparative analysis to identify common patterns or categories that were neither too inclusive nor too restrictive (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1994). This process required a continuous interplay between data and analysis in which the tentative categories were tested and refined. The categories were considered adequate when they could account for all data, a step that is otherwise known as reaching the point of redundancy (Taylor 1994).

The study developed through a series of stages beginning with the posing of research questions, identification of categories, and the counting and description of elements within categories.

The Research Process

The study asked two research questions concerning how individualism is depicted in advertising. Through an initial screening of the ads, the researchers noted that individualism could be expressed two ways -- through main message strategy and through context. This finding generated two research questions regarding individualism, each of which directed a stage of the research process that resulted in the identification of elements. These elements were later included in a coding sheet that enabled the researchers to gain a numerical count of elements.

The study first asked:

RQ1 When it appeals to individualism, how does advertising depict individualism in the main message strategy?

Stage 1. Based on Hofstede's characteristics of individualist and collectivist cultures (1980), each commercial was examined for the presence or absence of a main message element incorporating individualism. The main message element was defined as the intended overall impression to be gained from viewing the commercial, and most often it could be deduced by asking after viewing the commercial, "What will happen if I buy and use the advertised product?" Possible answers to the "What will happen" question related to individualism included, among many others:

1. I can develop my personality; become more "me."
2. I can gain self-respect; elevate my status to others/elevate a family member's status (make my child feel special).
3. I can be more efficient at accomplishing tasks including work and recreation.
4. I can win a promotion, increase skill level, learn to learn.
5. I can make better use of time including staying well to continue working.
6. I can make better use of money including caring for family finances.
7. I can be more attractive.
8. I can be healthier.
9. I can use products to identify my personality to others.
10. I can demand products to suit me.

By regrouping related elements, the authors collapsed the ten original elements into four broader main message strategies -- "The Esteemed Individual," "The Efficient Individual," The Physically Attractive Individual," and the "I Am Me Individual."

Three of the strategies require little explanation. The "Esteemed Individual" is made up of all esteem related message elements including developing personality, becoming more "me," gaining self-respect, and elevating my own (my nuclear family's) status. The "Efficient Individual" is made up of all message elements including being more efficient, winning a promotion, increasing skill level, learning to learn, and making better use of time and money. The "Physically Attractive Individual" captures all message elements related to being more attractive and being more healthy.

The "I Am Me Individual" is an extension of the "becoming more me" element of the "Esteemed Individual." The need for separate categories occurred because some products promise to help the consumer reach a state of "me-ness" previously not attained while others do not. Esteemed Individual messages imply that without the product, the individual has not yet succeeded in attaining the quality and, perhaps, never will. The "I Am Me" appeal is used when the state of "me-ness" is already assumed. The product or service becomes a way of symbolically representing rather than achieving this state. Some ads that use this message strategy claim that the product can identify the user's personality to others, while others claim that the user can demand products to suit his or her needs.

Main message elements that focused *only* on product performance, demonstration, uses, and applications without a promise to enhance the individual were not regarded as messages of individualism because the emphasis is on the product -- not the user.

Additionally, the study asked:

RQ2 How does advertising depict context to convey information regarding individualism?

Stage 2. Contextual elements were defined as "secondary characteristics of the commercial that reflect an individualistic society but are not part of the main message strategy." The contextual elements identified for analysis were: gender, race, ethnic group, age, occupation, recognition ceremonies, presence of nuclear family, and camera techniques that support individualism. The eight categories were not chosen to provide an exhaustive list of information about the cast members, but instead to provide the most easily observable yet significant contextual information. Presence of gender and occupation are straightforward coding elements, but the other categories require some explanation.

Race. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the racial categories for statistical reporting are: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, black, and white. Within the sample of ads, no American Indians, Alaska Natives, or Pacific Islanders appeared, leaving Asians as the only race present other than blacks and whites.

Ethnic Group. According to Census data, ethnic origin refers to country of origin, regardless of race. For example, those of Spanish/Hispanic origin are Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Other Spanish/Hispanic origin regardless of race.

Age. An estimate of the age of each individual was made according to the following four age categories: (1) Child and Teens (infancy to 19 years), (2) Young Adult (20 to 39 years old), (3) Middle Adult (40 to 59), and (4) Older Adult (60 and over). Age designations were approximations since determining the age of a cast member with certainty was impossible; e.g., the difference between age 39 and 40 is not readily apparent.

Nuclear Family. Presence of nuclear family was noted when either a married couple was portrayed, or a couple with children were shown. One parent and child were sufficient to be counted as nuclear family. Portrayals that included relatives beyond the parent-child relationship such as grandparents, cousins, and aunts and uncles were excluded.

Recognition Ceremonies. Within an individualistic society, people strive to be recognized for their own merits. In order to grant them the recognition they deserve for their accomplishments, certain opportunities for recognition must exist within the culture. Both formal award ceremonies, such as college graduations, and informal celebrations, such as eating a special meal with the family, were noted.

Camera Techniques. American advertising texts typically instruct copywriters to use first person point-of-view in writing the ads.

> When people read your copy, they are *alone.* Pretend you are writing each of them a letter on behalf of your client. One human being to another; second person *singular* (Ogilvy 1985, p. 80).

The manner in which commercials are filmed can also support individualism by offering a first person point-of-view. The "subjective camera" in film terminology facilitates identification and is a technique that has been used in film since the 1920s (Cook 1985).

Coding Decisions

For any given commercial, the possible codings were (1) does/does not have a main message of individualism, (2) does/does not contain one or more contextual cues related to individualism. For ads expressing individualism, the single best main message category was chosen per ad, but all contextual cues that applied were noted and described. Thus, many ads contained information on not one but several contextual cues.

While most commercials with main messages of individualism presented the message within a context that further supported individualism, some did not. Others used contextual support of individualism without a main message. The independent occurrence of main message and context required independent coding decisions for the two. For example, a financial planning ad used both elements with the main message claim that the product can help parents provide better, i.e. more efficiently, for their child's future education and a contextual element of nuclear family with a mother and daughter together at home. Other ads, including one for a breakfast cereal, lacked main messages of individualism by speaking only of the taste of the product but produced a contextual cue of nuclear family by showing a mother and daughter eating breakfast together at home.

FINDINGS, EXAMPLES, AND FREQUENCIES

The two-stage process resulted in the identification of categories that emerged from the data and the creation of a coding sheet (see the Appendix). A third stage required the counting of frequencies within categories using the coding sheet. The findings are given below with examples from each category.

Individualism -- Main Message Strategy

A total of 155 of 198 ads (78%) contained main messages of individualism, and 192 of 198 ads (97%) supported individualism through the context. The ads specifically outlined four ways in which one can stand out and be recognized as an individual within U.S. culture: The Esteemed Individual, The Efficient Individual, The Attractive Individual, and The "I Am Me" Individual.

The Esteemed Individual. Ads in this group hold a promise to consumers that the product will enhance their self-esteem, a strategy used by 7% of the ads. For example, a McDonald's ad opened with a female African-American teacher introducing the first place essay winner, Jerri Bell, an African-American girl about 8 years old.

> *When I'm a parent I hope I won't have to be a single parent. You have to work all day, spend time with your kids, and take them places like McDonald's for a Happy Meal so they feel special. When I have kids, I hope my husband lives forever, but if I have to be a single parent, I want to be just like my Daddy.*

The ad tells parents that treating a child to a McDonald's Happy Meal will raise self-esteem by making the child feel "special," which also enhances adults by making them feel they are good parents.

Using a different approach, a Pizza Hut ad shows that the product can win friends in tough situations. On the drive to school, a mother (white, early 30s) talks to her 10-year-old son who is nervous about changing schools:

> *Mom: I know it's a new school, honey, but you'll make lots of friends. (Scene changes to classroom.)*
> *Teacher speaks to students who look cold and unfriendly: Meet our new student, Timothy Hayes... Lunch break, class.*
> *Mom (at home on the phone): His name is Timmy. It's sort of a surprise.*
> *Pizza Hut delivery person (at the cafeteria where Timmy is sitting alone): Hi. Timmy Hayes?*
> *Timmy: Yes?*
> *Deliveryperson: Your pizzas are here. (Timmy looks surprised.)*
> *VO: Pizza Hut announces two one-topping pan pizzas for just 13 bucks.*
> *Timmy invites the other students: Anyone want some pizza?*
> *Students: I do. (They surround him, share the pizza, and accept him as their new friend and classmate).*
> *Girl Student: Hi. (She comes over to Timmy, puts her hand on his shoulder and speaks to him coyly.)*
> *VO: It's a class act.*
> *(Sung) You'll love the stuff we're made of, Pizza Hut.*

The ad shows viewers that by treating his classmates to Pizza Hut pizza, Timmy instantly went from being a lonely outsider to everybody's new friend.

The Efficient Individual. By far the largest category of main message strategy is the Efficient Individual (55%). Ads using this approach claim to make the individual more efficient at work, at home, in recreational activities, etc.

An ad for the Navy focuses on two young men, one white and one black, playing basketball aboard ship as the officers look on. The ad plays off viewers' expectations that the men are good basketball players when, in fact, they are comically inept. The ad tells how they can prepare for their future efficiently by learning a skill and earning money for their college education.

> *Wayne Winfield and Ron Williams were two of the most heavily recruited high school kids in the country. Of course, it wasn't for their game. It was for their minds. And thanks to the Navy College Fund and the Montgomery GI Bill they have a chance to really use them. Because they can earn up to $30,000 for college. So even if the NBA isn't in their future (Ron says 'I guess that's game'), a BA is. For more information call 1-800-USA-NAVY.*

While many of the efficiency ads were work related, a few were set at home. In a Blockbuster Video ad set in a large Victorian home, visuals presented an idyllic view of parenthood in a warm family scene with a young couple and their children watching a video. The ad enumerated the many advantages of making it a "Blockbuster night."

> *VO: We'd like to remind you that whenever you make it a Blockbuster night, you never need a baby-sitter. The parking is always free, the atmosphere is as casual as the dress code, and you always get the best seat in the house. With over 9,000 Blockbuster videos to choose from, we'd like you to remember that when it comes to a great night with the family, there's no place like home. There's no place like home. Make it a Blockbuster night.*

The Attractive Individual. Ads for the Attractive Individual claim that the product will make consumers healthier or more attractive. Ads offering attractiveness were more often directed toward women than men, but ads for health targeted both. A total of 14% of the ads used an attractiveness/health main message strategy.

An ad for Ponds Age Defying Lotion introduced a spokeswoman at the Pond's Institute who promises the product will deliver younger looking skin -- clearly the look needed to be attractive.

> *Women ask me if there's really anything that can make them look younger. I ask them "are you still just using a moisturizer?" I give them Pond's new Age Defying Lotion. It contains alpha nutrium. No age defying ingredient has been found that can beat it. They start to see the proof in two weeks, the look and feel of younger skin. Try getting that from a moisturizer. Age Defying Lotion. New from the Pond's Institute.*

TABLE 2
MAIN MESSAGE STRATEGIES FOR INDIVIDUALISM

Individualism Category	Incidence	Percent
The Esteemed Individual	13	7
The Efficient Individual	109	55
The Attractive Individual	27	14
The "I Am Me" Individual	6	3
No Main Message	43	22
Total	198	100

Individualism -- Context

Information in the context that helps to define individualism was found in 192 ads (97%). The message strategies show what paths can be taken to achieve individualism, but the added information in the context defines how gender, age, race, and ethnic group affect the pursuit of individualism. Additionally, the ads show what types of occupations are most fitting, the occasions that are most meaningful, and the definitions of family that are most accepted within the individualistic culture.

One example that included contextual information without a main message strategy was an ad for the beef industry. The visuals showed four different slice-of-life scenarios of families and friends interacting, all of which were rich in contextual information.

> *VO: When the Clay family dropped over unexpectedly, they had beef and pasta primavera./ For the first ever straight A report card, it was stir-fried beef fajitas./ And for the upset victory on the bowling league tourney it was bistro steak sauce./ Of course, it's not that you need a special occasion to appreciate dinners like these. All you really need is half an hour, and your average Wednesday will do just fine. Beef. It's what's for dinner.*

By noting the activities of the cast members in this particular ad, one might note that the way for adult men to express individualism within U.S. culture is by having a wife who takes care of him, the home, and the family; having friends; rewarding the scholastic achievement of one's children; and winning at sports. Women excel by caring for the home, husband, and children; entertaining friends; and, to a lesser extent than men, winning at sports. Whites appear to be more successful at attaining these things than blacks or people of ethnic background, and older people are largely absent from

A second example used a health claim outside the realm of attractiveness. A Florida Orange Juice ad opened with an alarm clock ringing while a young man (white, late 20s) got up, put on running shoes, shorts, and a T-shirt, and poured a glass of orange juice.

> *VO: Right now John Morrison isn't thinking about cancer. Or the medical studies that conclude that foods rich in vitamin C like Florida Orange Juice may actually lower the risk of some types of cancer. So while he may not know it, he's doing something good for his body every morning. Even on those days he's not able to exercise. 100% pure Florida Orange Juice. To your health!*

The "I Am Me" Individual. The "I Am Me" Individual is the smallest (3%) category of individualism message strategy. It flatters the individual much like the esteem category but differs because the person has already achieved the state of individualism. The following example is an ad in which the individual is so sure of his identity that he can demand products. In a Burger King ad, an African-American spokesman about 35 years old is savvy enough to know exactly what he wants, and he is not enticed by mere claims of convenience and price.

> *Look, I appreciate the fact that fast food is inexpensive (only 99 cents). I know its convenient and all that, but if I'm going to give you 99 of my cents, you gotta give me more than just some burger. I mean is it a Whopper? Is it flame broiled? Or is it fried? Can I get it how I want it or am I going to be scraping off gobs of secret sauce? I mean I can get a roll of duct tape for 99 cents. Doesn't mean I'm going to make it my lunch.*
>
> *VO: The 99 cent Whopper, now at Burger King.*

In a second example of this strategy an Aurora ad shows a group of people at a cocktail party while a woman (white, late 30s) gazes at a painting beside her. She "escapes" from the party and is driving the car in the picture, waving to the others she left behind.

> VO: *When something fresh comes into your life at the exact moment you are ready for it, it's not coincidence. Aurora, by Oldsmobile. See what happens when you demand better. Aurora.*

Ownership of the car is presented as a natural outcome of being a self-actualized person rather than as a possession to give her status. This is quite different from the Pizza Hut ad in which the new student needed to treat his classmates to pizza in order for them to accept him.

A total of 43 ads (22%) did not contain messages of individualism, but most included information in the context that supports individualism. Table 2 shows the frequency for each individualism category.

these occasions.

A count of the 703 people cast in the 198 ads provided detailed contextual information about gender, age, occupation, race, ethnic group, family constellation, and recognition ceremonies. When the composition of contextual elements was compared to the general population through census data, the representations in the ads consistently provided a disproportionate view of reality. Generally, men were overrepresented (men comprised 56% of those in the ads but represent 49% of the population, while women comprised 44% of those in the ads but represent 51% of the population); gender roles depicted very few women working in occupations outside the home when in fact they represent 43% of the full-time work force; people 20-39 years old were vastly overrepresented (66% in the ads but 32% of the population); ethnic groups were underrepresented (only 3% of the people in ads showed signs of ethnicity while 9.5% of the population is Hispanic, not to mention other ethnic groups); and whites were slightly overrepresented (89% in the ads and 85% of the population). See Table 3 for specifics.

Aside from the numerical representations, the ads provided other insights into certain categories.

Gender and Occupation. In addition to underrepresenting women who work outside the home, the ads showed a narrower choice of occupation (19 different occupations for women cf 33 occupations for men). Men and women also differed in their leisure-time activities -- men most often spent their leisure time participating in sports or attending sporting events while women went shopping, spent time with friends and family, and participated in beauty rituals such as having their hair styled.

Men were highly credible spokespersons for technical products, long distance and financial services and automobiles. Women were credible spokespersons for cleaning products, health and beauty aids, and OTC drugs that wives or mothers dispense to family members. In a reversal of traditional gender roles, a Mop & Glo ad cast a man cleaning the kitchen floor; however, he lacked the characteristics of attractiveness usually associated with idealized depictions of masculinity in the media, which can convey the idea that "real men" don't do domestic chores. Another gender reversal

TABLE 3
A COMPARISON OF CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION FROM TWO SOURCES: SAMPLE VERSUS U.S. CENSUS INFORMATION

Group	Sample	U.S. Census
	Gender	
Males	56%	49%
Females	44%	51%
	Age	
Children/Teens	21%	29%
Young Adults	66%	32%
Middle Adults	9%	22%
Older Adults	4%	17%
	Race	
White	89%	85%
Black	10%	12%
Asian	1%	3%
	Ethnic Group	
Hispanic	1%	10%
	White Family Composition: Percent of Children Under 18 Years Old Living in Household	
Two Parents	50%	79%
Father Only	31%	4%
Mother Only	19%	18%
	Black Family Composition: Percent of Children Under 18 Years Old Living in Household	
Two Parents	17%	38%
Father Only	50%	3%
Mother Only	33%	58%

ad cast a single mother in a financial planning situation. She says:

> *I never wanted to grow up. Much less get older. A daughter. Even the word used to scare me. Now I have commitments -- that she would have an education -- that my parents will always be o.k. Love is expensive.*

The ad continued with a male voiceover explaining that a plan from Merrill Lynch can show you how to take control of the future. The woman engaged in an activity more commonly assigned to men; however, she exhibited childlike anxieties and fears. Gender role reversals were limited to a small number of ads, but they suggested that advertising is most comfortable placing people in traditional gender roles, and it subtly penalizes those who venture into new ones.

Age. As noted from the earlier reported frequencies, young adults were overrepresented to such an extreme that all other age groups were underrepresented. When children were present in ads, they were fed, nurtured, cared for when sick, entertained, protected, and provided for financially. Teenager boys played video games, teenage girls talked on the phone, and teenagers of both genders worked in fast food restaurants and attended school.

The overrepresented young adult group was composed of active, interesting, attractive, capable, productive people who were most often shown at work or caring for children. The underrepresented middle adult group generally held positions of authority and appeared successful and affluent. Older adults only appeared in 4% of the ads and were usually depicted as retirees with time on their hands, parents to be cared for by their adult children, people to stay in touch with by phone, and comic figures that served primarily for humor.

While advertising is not the only institution that privileges youth and perpetuates stereotypes, as a whole the sample provided an inaccurate view of the distribution of age and depicted limiting associations of success and failure tied to age.

Race and Ethnic Group. The primetime network ads generally overrepresented whites and underrepresented ethnicity. Exceptions were usually ads that had a large cast, and the inclusion of non-whites and people with observable ethnic characteristics served to show that the product is for everyone.

The misrepresentation of race and ethnicity did two things: (1) discounted the role non-whites and those of ethnic background play in society, and (2) offered too few portrayals of everyday life to correct stereotypes. Ads that included cast members of ethnic origin sometimes used a comical, stereotypical role such as an emotional Italian hairdresser who communicated by waving his hands and sputtering in Italian.

Nuclear Family. A total of 26% of the ads presented people in nuclear family constellations, which differed by race. White families showed children with two parents in 50% of the nuclear family ads, but black families only showed children with two parents in 17% of the ads. For both races, if only one parent was present, it was more often the father than the mother. While the absence of a parent does not necessarily represent a single parent household, it is one interpretation that viewers can make.

For example, Quaker Instant Grits depicted two families in the same ad -- one black family and one white. The ad opened with an African-American mother and daughter eating breakfast while hurrying to leave for work and school, and it cut to the scene of a white family (father, mother, and son) sitting down to eat breakfast. The absent father in the black family does not necessarily mean that he does not live in the household, but at the same time his absence "looked" as natural as the inclusion of the father in the white family. If a higher incidence of absentee fathers in black families carries across to other television advertising, this can send a negative message regarding the constellation of black families to viewers. With these and other contextual elements, what was missing from the ads was often as important was what was present.

Recognition Ceremonies. Twenty percent of the ads showed people receiving some form of praise or recognition. Among the personal accomplishments recognized in the ads were attaining physical attractiveness (losing weight, having beautiful skin, being younger looking, and getting the closest shave), excelling in sports (making the winning play in the basketball playoffs, winning at bowling), achieving scholastically (winning an essay contest, earning straight As, and graduating from college), and surpassing others on the job and in hobbies (owning a great restaurant, winning a cooking contest, having the best recycling ideas, and singing a solo in a chorus). The ads not only convey that being the best deserves special recognition, but they define what is worthy of recognition.

Camera Techniques. In advertising, the first-person point of view is seen in a variety of ways, e.g., by showing products such as food in close-ups from the viewpoint of one person eating it, or by presenting spokespersons talking directly to each viewer. This reinforces the individualistic tradition that allows consumers to make decisions based on what is good for "me" rather than for what is good for the group.

CONCLUSIONS

Summary

When looking at ads as a whole, individualism is an important, attainable goal in American society. Efficiency is by far the most common way to achieve individualism, and it reinforces the belief in a "monochronic" time system -- that time is a finite commodity that can be spent, saved or lost (Hall 1959). Attaining attractiveness is also a strong path, but it is narrowly defined, dependent upon youth, and is somewhat more important for women than men. Healthiness is important for both men and women, and two types of esteem messages hold still other ways to succeed in attaining individualism. The context teaches viewers that people who do achieve individualism are predominately white, non-ethnic, 20-39 years old, and who maintain the most traditional gender roles.

Impact on the Culture

In light of the findings of this study, it is important to rethink the issue of whether advertising merely reflects values in the culture already in place, or constructs new values either by promoting change or by inaccurately reflecting what is there. According to Pollay:

> A common defense of advertising against criticisms of its cultural role is that it must, of necessity, be in harmony with its culture; messages must employ symbols and cultural values that are readily understood and accepted by the intended audience. In this view, advertising is seen as a mirror that only reflects and exposes existing cultural values and behaviors (1986, p. 32).

If advertising reflects what already exists, then the expression of individualism and the contextual information found in the study should be an accurate depiction of the culture. However, a comparison of the reality of the ads with the reality of census data showed that ads are not always true to the culture. The ads used messages that appear culturally relevant to some member of the population, but by reflecting values disproportionately, the ads privileged some expressions over others.

For example, the four paths to individualism are a limited set when considering the number of other ways to express individualism. In U.S. culture, some find recognition through intellectual pursuits and artistic endeavors while some people stand out and are recognized for their humanitarian pursuits without personal gain. Very little evidence of this, if any, was found in this sample, perhaps because these expressions are less suited to advertising's sales objectives.

Advertising also presented a restrictive view of gender roles, reinforcing traditional roles and penalizing the few who venture outside the boundaries. As gender roles continue to evolve wihin the culture with the work force continuing to employ more women, and more families shifting the household duties to other members, the stereotypical roles in advertising can prove to be limiting.

Perhaps the limited set and stereotypical expressions are not entirely surprising. According to Pollay:

> Not all values are equally suited for use in commercials. Some are more plausibly linked to the products in current production, some are more dramatically visualized, and some are more reliably responded to by the consuming public. Thus, in the aggregate, some of our cultural values are reinforced far more frequently than others. Hence, while it may be true that advertising reflects cultural values, it does so on a very selective basis, echoing and reinforcing certain attitudes, behaviors, and values far more frequently than others (1986, pp 32-33).

The depictions in this study support Pollay's position that certain values are, in fact, reinforced on a selective basis. When some but not all depictions are presented, they are legitimized and reinforced at the expense of others. Over time, new values replace others.

Schudson (1984) agrees to the lack of fit between advertising and the real world:

> Advertisements pick up and represent values already in the culture. But these values, however deep or widespread, are not the only ones people have or aspire to, and the pervasiveness of advertising makes us forget this. Advertising picks up some of the things that people hold dear and re-presents them to people as *all* of what they value... (p. 233).

The reality for advertisers is that products are not targeted to all members of the population proportionately by age, gender, race, etc. The television programs and the ads they carry are intended to reach the specific demographic groups that are the target market for the products. This constraint makes the content of advertising as a whole an unlikely source for "balanced" portrayals, either in their numerical representation or in the role depictions. It stands to reason that advertisers sometimes take a conservative, middle of the road approach when depicting people in order to avoid controversy, and outside of the very narrowly targeted media choices, advertising is more likely to use a safe, conservative portrayal that may lag a step behind the culture.

Consumers who know the constraints of the industry and recognize the likelihood of the unintended consequences of advertising can defend against some of the messages, but to place this responsibility on consumers is unfair given the pervasiveness of ads across all media, the repetition of messages, the level of professional skill in the creation of messages, and the detachment of many consumers from other sources of cultural influence (Pollay 1986).

Ultimately this raises questions concerning the responsibility of advertisers. This study asks advertisers to abandon the more comfortable position that advertising merely reflects values and recognize that they have the power to construct values. This could hardly be otherwise since certain targeting strategies make some consumers more desirable than others and certain advertising appeals more effective than others. The study asks that advertisers become more aware of the general characteristics of the population and become more self-conscious in the ways they depict values so that whenever possible they show the use of products by people who more accurately reflect the true population. In other words, advertisers are asked not only to tell the truth about products but about the culture.

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APPENDIX
CODING SHEET FOR INDIVIDUALISM

Main Message:

yes_____	1. Esteemed Individual
no______	2. Efficient Individual
	3. Attractive Individual
	4. I Am Me Individual

Context:	1. Gender
yes_____	2. Occupation
no______	3. Age
	4. Race
	5. Ethnic Group
	6. Appearance of Nuclear Family
	7. Recognition Ceremonies
	8. Camera Technique

ANALYSIS OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES FROM 1991 - 1996

A paper for presentation by the Qualitative Studies
Division at the 1997 AEJMC annual meeting

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ANALYSIS OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

ABSTRACT

This research paper represents a first step toward contextualizing the study of Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) within the framework of mass communications. An impassioned topic among certain groups, the incidence of PAS is apparently more prevalent than one would suspect. Save for accounts of Jack Kevorkian's activities and a few contested cases, the media were initially silent in this regard. After defining terms and detailing relevant background material, a research proposal is set forth that utilizes textual analysis to trace the threads of developing accounts. Specifically, coverage of PAS in the New York Times over the past six years is analyzed to glean organizing principles that create cultural meanings for the practice.

"Some Third World countries in dire need of foreign exchanges could conceivably legalize euthanasia to attract [U.S. residents]. The businesses likely to benefit include airlines, funeral homes, and tourism...no expensive medical equipment is needed...greater revenues can be generated if the clinic is part of an organ transplant hospital [a concept now used in China]."[1] - from "Wealth Transfer Through Voluntary Death," Journal of Health and Social Policy, March 1994

ANALYSIS OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES FROM 1991-1996

INTRODUCTION

To establish basic terms for understanding the discussion, the following definitions are offered:

- Physician Assisted Suicide: The assistance of a physician in the death of a patient. The final act is solely the patient's.
- Euthanasia: Voluntary euthanasia involves the direct intervention of the health care worker, who provides the means and carries out the act.[2]

Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) has apparently become ubiquitous; physicians report that "sedating to death terminally ill patients, often without their knowledge or consent, with increasing doses of morphine, is already an everyday occurrence that needs to be brought out of the closet."[3] Cultural fears and religious bias play a large role in the covert nature of this procedure - but those forces may be in transition. For example, the Catholic Church is the nation's largest private health care provider, accounting for over 580 hospitals and 15% of the beds in the United States. In 1994, there were over 100 mergers with non-Catholic hospitals and HMOs.[4] This has focused media concern on issues such as abortion, artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization, contraception, cessation of life support for the terminally ill, and research/treatment constraints as the boundaries between medical practice and religion become blurred. In the past, medicine practiced in Catholic hospitals has been able to act counter to the dictates of *Humane Vitae* by not "engaging in the issues publicly...but [with] mergers these issues have to be put out on the table."[5] But even in these cases, it is a mistake to perceive the issue of death as truly public: the transition from sacred to secular concerns permits process largely at the covert level of the medical arena, where it often remains cloistered.

I am interested in examining how the New York Times, as the newspaper of record, has dealt with this topic, particularly focusing on how the paper negotiates instances that defy institutional and societal codification. How the New York Times has dealt - or not dealt - with this issue speaks to how it has been configured within cultural, historical, and economic limits. Textual analysis is utilized to inform the relation of structural components in the narratives of PAS to the expressions of underlying ideologies and the possible strategies used in their interpretations.

BACKGROUND

PAS is a difficult and anxiety-producing topic because of its resonance with culturally and biologically determined forces. But to ignore it is to permit actions both unconscionable and destructive. The call for experimentation on criminals prior to execution, or the use of organ donations from PAS patients, are aspects that directly challenge some of our most valued notions of humanitarianism. If these various cultural positions are examined and structured in the news, what is the historical grounding that is used to frame the issue?

Historically, suicide, like abortion, was treated casually until Christians noted too many of their members were seeking martyrdom and that the birth rate was subsequently dwindling.[6] Christian concerns are still relevant in PAS, ranging from the Christian Coalition's pressure on the legislature to refrain from action to Catholicism's role in medical health settings.

These issues partially forced the very real routine of PAS into covert practice, with substantial concern that these actions need addressing in order to establish relevant guidelines. Derek Humphries, president of the Right to Die Society, has stated that laws establishing guidelines for euthanasia can never be passed until the religious right stops its strangle-hold on the legislature, having placed that administrative body in what Humphries terms "a permanent legislative state." Jack Kevorkian, whatever one thinks of his tactics, is attempting through civil disobedience to free up this impasse by forcing hospitals and physicians to admit that the practice already exists and that the legislature needs to act now. How are these partisan concerns reflected in the news; whose voice dominates?

The legal perspective is confusing, with laws varying from state to state. Procedural and substantive issues become muddled, and deontological reasoning is mixed with consequentialist. Two precedent setting cases in deciding for others exemplify the conflict within the courts. The confusion over correct procedural and substantive judgments in the cases of Joseph Saikewitz and John Storar have made it extremely difficult to anchor legal proceedings within any guidelines. These remain seminal cases in rulings over PAS and serve to underscore the unresolved issues in the intersection of law and decisions determining value of life. This is demonstrated in the confusion surrounding the latest rulings. How are these deciphered by the media and how are legislative rulings framed?

A further consideration involves the economic forces that intercalate in these issues. In the past, hospitals had a financial incentive to retain comatose or seriously ill patients in order to recover costs from health insurance and government agencies. Thus the ruling decision used to be that the best interest of the patient was being served. Now, with drastic financial restructuring of hospitals' economic base, the ethical decisions are becoming more utilitarian, with the costs being assessed as pragmatic yet humane considerations but underscored by financial incentives to free up beds. These are concerns that exist not only in the U.S., but in all nations as population dynamics constrain economic forces.

The net result of these forces is problematic for news analysis. When ideological bases shift the focus from which to work, news accounts often have to rely on narrative functions to tell the story - when and if they can - and these functions can pose interesting limits on news delivery.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The relatively covert nature of the interaction, along with the necessary use of possibly erroneous common-sense interpretations of the process, has led to Ezekiel Emanuel's request for work "urgently necessary for establishing social policy [including]: evaluating directly the attitudes toward and interest in euthanasia of terminally ill patients and their families, and the purposeful investigation of the actual practice."[7]

Medical care in the United States and elsewhere is undergoing profound transformation, some of it subtle, much of it drastically altering the basic institution of health care and the relative autonomy of the physician. Entwined in this matrix are transitions of vital role-definitions and moral frameworks that reveal much of latent societal conflict. Ethics evolve as scientific perspectives challenge and/or replace other, more reassuring cultural forces, and considerations of patriarchal attitudes shift toward more professedly equitable dynamics. Thus even the force of the law has undergone mutation: in the U.S., 36 states have laws prohibiting assisted suicide, yet in every case where a physician has compassionately assisted in a suicide, the courts have dismissed the verdict or found her not guilty.[8]

Research into news coverage of PAS focuses attention on a phenomenon that has remained largely concealed but that has enormous effects on social, ethical, and economic foundations. It also proffers an analysis of a culture within an historical context as it intercedes with the flux of feminism/pluralism and the shifting frame of ideological forces. If the system makes lurid or conceals the realities of PAS, does the news reflect this bias, much as it ignores and/or sensationalizes union activities, women's issues, and industrial accidents? Women are half, and minorities one-fourth, as likely to get organ transplants as Caucasian males.[9] Many feel these considerations are being played out in PAS as well. If social euthanasia is already operational in this country, has the news investigated or brought attention to this fact? How does the news frame the issue in regard to those nations that openly or covertly permit PAS and how are foreign accounts articulated into our own?

Only in regarding the ideological nature of the reconstruction of news reality can such practices be articulated with the culture as a whole.

The analysis should yield information helping address the phenomenon of marginalized issues in the press within a wide cultural and socioeconomic framing. The intent is to make explicit the strategies, functions, and constraints that imbue the news with significance, and how that meaning is organized into a constructed reality.

METHOD

The following delineates the approach used in analyzing the New York Times news coverage of PAS from 1991-1996, which was downloaded from ProQuest (Lexus-Nexus) onto disk (selected through boolean search: 'physician assisted suicide'; 'end of life decision'; 'suicide and decision'; 'terminally ill'; random scan of 'suicide'). The year 1991 was chosen as a starting date a) because it represents the approximate time of emergence of the debate in the press and b) while review of 1990 coverage would have been useful, a computerized database of that year was unavailable. Only news/magazine articles, photographs, and editorials were used in analysis; cartoons and letters to the editor were not considered at this time.

Strategies of inquiry connect the researcher to "specific methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials."[10] This project's perspective utilizes textual analysis as a means of explication. In dealing with an issue as complex and sensitive as PAS, it is imperative to remember that the phenomenon is intricately networked and has articulated, layered meanings; grounding in textual analysis permits unfolding and display of distinct meanings. It assumes that phenomenon are partially constituted through expressive media practices.

The theoretical framework in this analysis involves an interdisciplinary approach that is predominately grounded in cultural studies concerns but also derives influences from the work of feminism. It analyzes ideological forces on several levels, providing a qualitative alternative to content analysis. For the purposes of this paper, ideology refers to the Western ideology that "establishes the national and consensual assumptions of the entire society. In order to maintain this dominance [it] must...continuously disguise or displace...inevitable contradictions."[11] Communication is seen as a process that produces and configures the meanings of everyday life, while a cultural studies framework permits an examination of how reported experiences relate to cultural representations.

These considerations open up access to subverted meanings, historical context, ideological stances, the loss of authorial voice, examination of communication processes, and how dominant and negotiated meanings interact, forming a substantial base for textual analysis. It supports a sociocognitive and 'internal'[12] analysis of the representation of news and the underlying elicited meanings. The main goal of this paper is to use these methods as tools to trace how the ongoing PAS debate is being structured in public accounting in the New York Times. The purpose is to trace the strands of the argument as it informs our awareness, to find value in the interpretive process of ideas and material practices as they function to create and reflect specific forms of power relations.

Frame analysis[13] evolves from broad concerns of creative construction that indicate what is important about an event. A frame organizes reality itself, helping to establish the form of our world. Further, news frames create expectations that serve to organize and help predict relationships as new information is added.[14] And frames tend to suggest to the audience who or what is accountable: Iyengar demonstrates that specific framing makes responsible certain players in public issues.[15] The typical frame for stories in the U.S. is that the flaw is not in the "fabric of society but in the loose thread of the individual."[16] Iyengar has also noted that most news involves episodic frames that illustrate social issues through a focus on individual elements, rather than a thematic frame that tends toward the abstract issue itself. Official sources themselves can help create the frame, leading to news values that legitimate certain speakers and cultural beliefs over others.

In much research framing has evolved into a slippery concept, often elusively positioned at several levels of abstraction. For the purposes of this paper, framing is defined to mean use of thematic structure to construct and control a dominant meaning. Shifting frames in this sense often indicate problematic ideological containment; it is this core concern with ideological stance that informs this work. The significance in this study is how meanings are imposed on the issue of PAS by news reporters, how sources shape the accounts, and what the accountings preclude.

The normative methods that evolve from this macro level conceptualization are:

- Analysis of grammatical and linguistic structure of words, cases, etc. The use of neologisms, and ordering of components are examples.
- Lexical decisions indicating particular ideological positions (e.g., "sharks" instead of "lawyers.").
- Knowledge organized in the form of models and frames that organize and simultaneously exclude.
- Analysis and evaluation of the semantic macrostructure or theme. Headlines and leads are important in this category as an indication of subjective expressions. These forms indicate the basic nature of a news story.
- Examination of macro and superstructures of reports. The serial structure of news accounts and the changing discourse with temporal play.
- Examination of the persuasive character of news accounting, e.g., factors such as numbers to imply precision.
- An awareness that aspects of linguistic choice relate to stylistic choices of the media institution but nonetheless serve ideological ends.[17]
- Meaning as bound to ideological formations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Two medical discourse analysis projects are considered together. Peräkylä and Silverman examined health communication formats among the terminally ill. Both projects use textual analysis as a core interest, and this coincides with my interests in analyzing news accounts. However, their method of interpretation and analysis has too structured an approach, which creates limitations on interpretation. In many ways, uses of categorizing frames such as MCD (membership categorization descriptions) and strategies of conversational analysis create shallow accounts of events, with a paucity of human dimension and an overlay of resultant judgmental posturing, limiting the reading of the situation. The researchers analyze the accounts and assume that this process insures objective interpretations. Such structured analysis is more likely to distort meaning and splinter accounts. For example, many of the readings tend to evoke power relations, which is tacit in the account and never broached in the analyses. Issues of gender, class, and ethnicity are ignored in the overarching label of 'patient,' as are historical, economic, and cultural factors. There is a real lack of negotiation in this stance, as if meaning were without conflict or indicative of struggle. It attempts to create clarity in something that has more of a murky and indefinite status.

In trying to broaden relationships in evaluations of language in the social arena, qualitative analysis has turned to various measures such as the treatment of text as narratives (rather than factual accounts) and the analysis of their linguistic structure. In terms of health care and the media, a moderate amount has been written concerning rhetorical tactics in the U.S. Wallack, et al. note that news accounts invoking health usually "resonate well with our commonsense focus on individual autonomy as our primary value"[18] and that "the public often perceives...a health message as negative in that the policies being advocated are perceived as placing limits on rather than extending individual choice and opportunity."[19]

Condit's text Decoding Abortion Rhetoric is a detailed description of the way legal and cultural consensus was negotiated for abortion in the U.S. and has masterful insights into the stages of the debate as it evolved from narrative accounting to social enaction and minority concerns. The author asserts that discourse served as an active agent to transform abortion and change the status of both abortion and motherhood to one of "choice." This involved not a simple replacement of practices but a complex negotiation of partisan compromise through various channels, including argument and persuasion. While one can argue with the author's favoring lexical force over the many ideological interests that are involved, the work nonetheless mobilizes well-conceived analysis to create a resonant accounting.

Several studies investigate the issue of AIDS and news discourse, primarily through framing or other macro level tools of analysis. Rodney Jones examines cultural projection via frame levels as indicators of dominant ideologies in Hong Kong, finding that images opposed to family become rhetorically labeled as external to the dominant frame.[20] Rogers, Dearing, and Chang trace agenda-setting through seven years of AIDs reporting. They discovered that narrative accounting had greater impact than actual numbers of cases reported or news reports of important scientific findings.[21]

Effects of ideology on discourse and attention to news frames is integral to Todd Gitlin's study of media coverage in the 60s. His macro level analysis delineates the ways hegemonic forces create media frames that appear natural, functioning "as persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, which symbol-handlers routinely [use to] organize discourse."[22] Journalist routines are the bedrock for this means of standardized structuring of the news. Only in intrusive moments, when the discursive frame and ideology fail to match, does the frame shift or become exposed.

Chibnall uses the internal structure of news organization to examine how source relationships and occupational ideology serve to contain news reports. Here frames are dictated by source needs and thus fulfill source expectations, augmented by implicit rules of selection and interpretation of journalistic routine, with aspects of efficiency as central as those of ideology.[23]

Paul Rock examines the narrative function of news to retell tales, the 'news as the olds.' Here culturally resonant aspects are used to create a solipsistic identification of the news, an endless cycle of ritual and myth. In this analysis, the present account refers to past constructions and to reliable sources, with ephemeral and/or marginal groups unlikely to make the news.[24]

Most of these concerns harken back to issues raised by Horkheimer and Adorno regarding the effects of the culture/mind industry: the reinforced paternalism, the reification of technology, the sameness that pervades a "machine [rotating] on the same spot"[25] and the "obedience to the social hierarchy."[26] The implications of these factors in the creation of the PAS discourse will be addressed in the following sections.

FINDINGS

In the mid 80s, letters to the editor of medical journals detailed interest in the overt discussion of a process that was tacit in society and neglected by the media.[27] Perhaps because of the energies siphoned off by the abortion debate, PAS was basically destined to remain off-limits for the media until the 1990s; further, one can conjecture that an intricate confluence of journalistic conventions such as a hesitancy to attribute news to layperson's concerns, an unwillingness to disturb sympathetic but silent official sources, a lack of event-oriented material, and the construction of news not as collections of cases or accumulation of facts but as a cloak for privileged knowledge and institutions added to the lack of news attention to the topic.

The first public meanings that evolved in the early 90s remained under the planned supervision of Dr. Jack Kevorkian. He carefully chose his first patient for his 'death machine,' attempting to find one who would "garner favorable coverage...needed for the initial event."[28] But the focus would not be on the woman whose suicide he eventually assisted; rather, the focus established Kevorkian himself as a central element in the developing narrative, a symbolic representation of PAS and a convenient figure in case a "loose thread" would be needed if the fabric unravelled.

Dr. Kevorkian proved simultaneously a perfect and a difficult person to insert into existing frames. His obsession with his 'death machine,' the fact that he had not practiced medicine since the 1980s and not with a live patient since the 1950s, his lack of training in psychology, internal medicine, or geriatrics, and his interest in the macabre aspects of death created a persona lacking general ideological appeal. At the same time, his professional status - however tenuous - served to segue with news judgements that give preference to official sources and tend to veil thematic frames by focusing on individuals rather than abstract social issues.

The latter focus evolved into Kevorkian's portrayal embedded in the traditional myth of the intelligent, rugged individual attempting to provoke a hypocritical society into realizing its inherently faulty stance. This frame of individuality segued well into the coming frame of freedom of individual rights under the Fourteenth Amendment, intercalating the concerns of health and its relation to individual autonomy as a primary North American value. His is both the voice of the underdog struggling for rights and the authoritative voice of the physician using civil disobedience to uncloak a silenced practice. He became a figure with surprisingly widespread support. In attempts to sanitize his presence, many of his unpalatable aspects often had to be concealed by the media, either through omission, transformation, and/or explanation. How specifically did his disparate elements get played out in the press? What is the general tenor of his portrayal?

In early issues, Dr. Kevorkian's portrayal shifts from marginal figure toward a layered mystery and a paradox, accommodating a more culturally satisfying persona: he illuminates a sequestered practice and at the same time exposes the face of death. In the house of the physician where palpation occurs with intervening finger, where distance is continually approximated and death a constant presence,[29] the figure of Kevorkian is at once disconcerting and, yet, strangely familiar. Thus he is portrayed in 1991 as a modern Dr. Frankenstein, with "suicide devices created"[30] to engage in "murder,"[31] a physician who "turns serious proceedings into a media circus."[32] But even at this stage some room for negotiation of other meaning is permitted.

Despite the initial macrostructure that declares 'murder' as the focal interest, and the organizational schema that gives Kevorkian's prosecutor the initial voice, the routinized code of objectivity and balance manages to create room for the opinion of the defense lawyer that the prosecutor is "a buffoon living 2,000 years behind the times" and an "arch-Machiavellian manipulator waging a personal campaign against Kevorkian."[33] Further, even articles that seemingly give thematic dominance to narratives against PAS belie this in their macrostructural elements, such as headlines: "The Dirty Little Secret" or "Bad Medicine and Policy."[34] However, the initial, tentative frame was dominated by expressions of killing.[35]

When possible the prime space for debate - the lead and the final word, sometimes whole articles - relate to icons of the dominant ideology. An account of Dr. C. Everett Koop's stance on the issues of the day, entitled "Unwilling to Write Political Prescription," ends with his admonition that PAS asks the doctor "to be both killer and healer,"[36] using the lexical ideological bias of 'killer' to describe assisted suicide, and placing it in dominance to emphasize Dr. Koop's alarm at the potential loss of traditional role. Dr. Koop's remarks proffered legitimacy to the discussion of PAS.

Yet his was not the dominant frame that began to emerge, partially through the hesitancy of other official sources (particularly oppositional) to engage the debate, partially through Kevorkian's own significance as a source, and partially through his growing public appeal, factors creating difficulties in establishing a dominant frame. As Dr. Howard Brody, the head of the Michigan State Medical Society, observed: "We thought patients would be horrified by [Kevorkian's] rusty car in the parking lot, the unsterile solutions...it sounded so sleazy...instead a significant number want to erect a statue to [Kevorkian]."[37]

Soon the dialogue shifted, and PAS became 'Aid-in-Dying,' not 'murder,' as Washington voters considered Initiative 119. Of particular interest is the specifics in transformation of lexical intent: the news shifted focus toward a term more aligned with Kevorkian's view but as yet refused sanction of his own term, "obitiary." Thus the paper realigned its overt stance in line with their purported objectivity in a manner that still permitted room for negotiation of meaning. Respectable sources added their voices in championing assisted suicide: Jerry Kozinski used Hemlock Society guidelines to commit suicide, Dr. Timothy E. Quill publicized his assistance in the suicide of a leukemic patient, and, in efforts at persuasive rhetoric that matched its editorial pro-PAS position, the New York Times referred to such facts as Final Exit's lead in 'Advice and How-to' books. A different frame evolved, and the reports of 1991 riddled with charges that Kevorkian "focused on machines and...made it a mechanized, sterilized process"[38] were, if used at all, contextualized by 1993.

By then, accounts tempered the portrayals: "even his harshest critics acknowledge that Dr. Kevorkian is already responsible for energizing the national debate on [PAS]."[39] Headlines regarding Kevorkian begin to exemplify his status as the lone gunslinger: "Life as a Maverick"[40] highlights the subjective stance reporters now brought to their depictions of him and intercalates into notions of professionalism that, as Will Wright argues, are resonant with the values and perspectives of planned market economies: Kevorkian was corralled into another central frame. Headings began to reflect the public opinion polls that primarily supported PAS: "Fear of an Inhumane Death" and "Suicide Assistance Gains New Backing"[41] were typical of the macrostructural themes in the 93-94 coverage, although frames of a divided society were also utilized. Headers use Kevorkian's own phrases, as in "This Immoral Law,"[42] or "Encouraging Other Doctors" while selected oppositional voices appeared confused: "I don't believe there's a loophole there, but we need to tighten it up" said Senator Jack Weiborn.[43]

Patient attributes were largely ignored, but when a family member attended an assisted suicide they were often mentioned, in part serving to realign Kevorkian's lack of family (and reinforce family values of the dominant ideology). Patients also were part of efforts to validate through precision: they became clinical entities constituted by the exact date of death, numerical age, and disease status, a presentation that also imbued them with the status of criminals, fringe elements in a technocentric society.

From 1993-5, Kevorkian's stance as official source is solidified. The continuing difficulty of pinning down other official sources runs throughout news treatment of PAS: "A hospital is now involved;" "this is not a hospital matter...we regard this as something for the police;" "why are we seeking legal advice [from the courts] in a matter that is clearly a medical issue?" Through default, as primary source Kevorkian's own neologisms were being used in the press: his 'obitiary' and 'medicide' had become terms used often without explanation.

But Kevorkian changed his image much as Madonna. The depositing of bodies near hospitals and other 'culpable' institutions strained the frame that had been nurtured; this problematic positioning shifted focus to another device: murder mysteries. Headlines used exaggerated rhetorical devices such as "Body is Left Near Hospital"; reports detail "new twists" developing as a guard noticed a car with "its windows fogged...[later he] saw a body in the back seat covered with a sheet."[44] It is small wonder that several fictional mystery novels involving PAS were released soon after this phase, including "Murder at the Hospice." Then Kevorkian began a hunger strike and the news had to negotiate his image as Gandhi as he fasted during his Detroit trial. In this case, the organizing of the news schema shifted to encompass a more sanctified image while remaining distant from Catholic concerns: a Unitarian minister who lends assistance to the terminally ill in committing suicide is highlighted, the Catholic Conference given short shrift.[45] Author Lisa Belkin writes: "behind these polar positions lies an open secret of medicine. Assisted suicide, though generally against the law, happens all the time...I've heard countless stories."[46] And the lead in a 1993 story begins "Most everyone here in his hometown seems to like the man they call Dr. Death, Jack Kevorkian, the thoughtful, neighborly retired pathologist."[47]

As Artho Danto notes, any narrative sequence that describes a change from an initial state of affairs also includes an explanation of it. Thus Kevorkian's macabre paintings are now explained as a means of highlighting suffering in order to prevent it; his death machines hailed as technical innovations. Stress is no longer placed on the patient as killed in gruesome surroundings, but rather Kevorkian's dignity of approach as mentioned by one Rev. Phifer; the help Kevorkian gives to the terminally ill; the good effort to provide relief from the bane of suffering; and the grateful acknowledgment of survivors. While Kevorkian's image is somewhat transformed through the media coverage, more significantly the shifting frames used to locate his presence speak to difficulty in ideological grounding.

By 1995-6 a larger change emerged: stronger oppositional voices arose and the legislative and judicial period frames most coverage, although the Supreme Court has been a most reluctant participant (indeed, the metanarrative falters). Kevorkian still commands some attention, but news accounts - in both focus and language - engage in more standardized ideological issues. Kevorkian is now discussed in terms of being the pawn in "two expensive and highly publicized trials"[48] and note is made of court decisions and legislative concerns, a frame that is more resonant with journalistic ideals.

Oppositional religious elements grew bolder, and news accounts were forced to deal with our embedded conception of ourselves as modern, the product of medical reason over ignorance and religion. Religious concerns had been marginalized in coverage. While the General Assembly of the Church of Christ became the first major religion to accept PAS for the terminally ill and was portrayed neutrally, in other treatment doctors were seen as at odds with religious groups, groups that "pressure them to aggressively treat the last stages of disease even when they are inclined to stop."[49] Accounts in a section entitled "the Fragmented Hospital" portrayed religious groups as creating oppositional forces to institutional authority figures, and other articles pointed to the difference between theological teachings and political behavior. Pope Pious XII permitted cessation of tube feedings in hopeless cases, but Catholic hospitals are revealed to operate by stricter traditions: a hint of hypocrisy creates a negative image for religious elements in the debate.

As the full accounting of legal/political matters took hold and religious considerations were sidelined, one significant tale remained to be told in the New York Times: it was in the July 21, 1996 Sunday Magazine and entitled "The Case Against Doctor Assisted Suicide."[50] The article serves as a complete counter to the tenor of the coverage in the paper and revives what had been a strong dominant frame for prior periods. The sophistication of this morality play is amazing. The photographs carefully align an ethicist, lawyer, psychiatrist, and neurologist along the top header, yielding the sense through diversity of widespread support. They are displayed with the symbols of their professionalism: white coats, oak doors opening onto well-lit rooms, crosses on somber blue walls. They are literally referred to as symbolic representations of their profession, and discussed through labels such as 'The Lawyer' or 'The Priest' or 'The Doctors'.

Doctors are evenly divided about PAS, yet the schema of this article impresses the reader with 'The Doctors' strong stance against PAS. The narrative details the struggle of Dr. Carlos Gomez to keep alive Lisa Jarrell, a woman with cerebral palsy and in excruciating pain. By the conclusion, Lisa is a jaunty woman making coy remarks to an amused Dr. Gomez. This macrostructure places the argument solidly in the realm of paternalistic accounting, even with the admission of an Hispanic doctor into the account. The patient becomes a child: "her tiny legs saucily crossed, daring Dr. Gomez once again to keep her alive."[51] Like the other patients in this article, she becomes framed as (sexually) manipulative, childlike, given to whim rather than excruciating, soul-searching trials. Patients as participants in the text constitute children as clinical objects. Gomez "is a handsome man...with soft brown eyes and hands that instinctively reach out to reassuringly touch his patients."[52] His culturally reified presence, along with those of the other professionals in this article, is aligned against PAS. Even the typeface, with highlights in bright red, brings connotations of blood, suffering, and salvation, and the out-of-focus type used for the title words 'Doctor Assisted Suicide' creates a sense of eeriness that imbues the story.

The narration, so counter to the bulk of news accounting, creates the sense of objectivity, of hearing the other side of the story. Interestingly, the coverage evolved from Catholic reaction to the news coverage and served to mediate the relatively positive coverage that Kevorkian had generated. But the lack of well-orchestrated support for religious voices from the opposition did not result in a direct challenge to the status quo; by the time it evolved (in this Magazine section) there was no longer any room for its momentum. This was an overtly religious, paternalistic frame that serves as an ersatz oppositional voice, and its presence was to weaken with the evidence in the secular proceedings to follow. But the significance of these secular accounts on the overall ideological message may simply represent a changing of the guard.

In the legislative dealings, two major rulings on PAS were to have a powerful effect on the debate. The decision of the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which rested the right for assisted suicide in the due process clause of the 14th Amendment, the same provision used for abortion rights, in essence paralleled the rulings of the Second Circuit that overturned the NY ban on assisted-suicide based on another part of the 14th Amendment, the equal protection clause. Invoking both the rights of individuals and the concept of equality provided strong ideographic force for the PAS movement and echoed a move toward requirements, catapulting it into the more abstract, social realm of jurisdiction and legislation. A new bias and thus a new frame begins, an organizational rhetoric that places the issue firmly within the dominant and abstract ideological nexus. The complexity of the court's decisions, much as the complexity of the original judgments on Storar and Saikewitz, become simplified for news reports. Paternalism becomes prevalent, as do concerns for "protection" and the authority of "medicine's sanction."[53]

The morals of the dominant ideology have surfaced. But whose morals are reflected? Carol Gilligan points out that the legal system is based on a moral system of rules that already justifies the dominant patriarchy, while minority voices and women, who often reason in terms of weighing their own concerns and public morality, are left out of this accounting.[54] A news item from this period refers to a study that claims "1 of 5 nurses in intensive-care units report deliberately hastening a patient's death."[55] The interesting aspect of this is the news schema: hospital administrators become the focus as they take to task the accuracy of the report, remarking that the questionnaire was ambiguous: the nurses' responses probably reflected anxiety and confusion. A frame conducive to a lexical bias supporting the nurses as children given to rending the whole cloth is evoked. One physician demonstrates this in the following explanation for the 'faulty' results: when a nurse wishes a patient dead and enters the room to find the patient expired, in the nurses "simple-minded way, [they] relate that to causing the death."[56] The problem is relegated to the naive fears of the nurses rather than to the details of actual practice expressed by the nurses. The frame of paternalism is still intact.

By late May, 1996 Kevorkian had been found not guilty of violating Michigan common law, and the legal schema is in place. Active verbs that related to jousts and fights (events were designed to "provoke a legal showdown"[57]) are now replaced by court formality: he "argued his case" and "this case was the last...[anticipated] proceeding against him."[58] The move to a more complex stage is complete, Kevorkian's talk-show appearances and other attention-grabbing devices are augmented and/or replaced by other voices in the debate (notably Drs. Quill and Callahan's) as well as news items that delve into substantive issues as the Supreme Court prepares to engage the issue. The courts are now the authority; religious elements are still minimized: a Christian rally against PAS is described as a group of young people carrying "...cookies and blankets...more absorbed in being part of a throng ...than in the political symbolism of the setting."[59] Similarly, tension was dispelled by describing Timothy Leary's Internet suicide as an absurdity and a threat to a serious issue.

When Cardinal O'Connor took the debate out of the legal setting and into the pulpit, the frame of religious hypocrisy and anachronism was subtly invoked. When he decided not to address PAS during Easter celebration, the news account remarks "he then proceeded to address the topic nonetheless;" the reporter labeled the Cardinal's attack against the recent Federal appeals decision permitting PAS in New York State a "jeremiad."[60] The Cardinal also confused PAS and euthanasia, creating doubts about his knowledge of and genuine interest in the subject.

The dominant frame now discusses PAS in ideographic forms: it creates space for issues that deal with "fundamental human dignity, freedom of choice and protection of privacy."[61] Issues that had lain dormant tentatively emerge: "In an era of economic limits..[these legal precedents could] lead to involuntary euthanasia" due to lack of funds and/or use of surrogates.[62] Significantly, many accounts pose the government as part of the problem rather than the solution. The physicians who successfully challenged New York's ban on assisted suicide said "it was important for them, their peers, and their patients to make decisions about the end of life without government intrusion."[63] As media attention grows on this subject, and as the Supreme Court decision is announced, it will be interesting to see how the social potential of government forces as well as the aspect of individual freedom, which informed much of Kevorkian's framing and accounts for most Americans' support of PAS in polls, will be negotiated in the press.

Significantly, the discourse evidenced is noteworthy for what it excludes as much as what it retains. At first, there is no focus for the issue in the vast abstract institutional networks of the hospitals and the law; further, the news has trouble fixing a specific frame. Early accounts vividly demonstrate both the frustration of locating authoritative sources and the subsequent problematic frame for Kevorkian, who was used to channel the uncertainty. Kevorkian and his patients almost become accountable as the problem, the loose threads in a solid fabric, yet (among other factors) his persistence to move the debate to the social sphere will transform the story into the important arena of social accountability. But this focus on Kevorkian, while satisfying organizational requirements, does come at a price.

Social euthanasia is already a presupposed occurrence. Surveys of African-Americans demonstrate that they are afraid that they will be harmed in seeking basic health care, let alone in aid-in-dying.[64] Enormous social barriers already exist that are aggravated by economic issues. That the news demonstrates great concern over PAS when basic health care needs of our society are woefully inadequate speaks shamefully of our national moral perspective. The economic practices that underlie these trends are obscured in accounts that play out to individual or professional concerns. The complex interplay between government and large, private corporate accounts was obscured in the 2-day maternity leave law (HMOs use it to detect and eliminate sympathetic physicians) and is obscured in PAS, where concerns about expensive technologies, need for empty beds, and apprehensions generated by legislators intercalate in a shifting, elusive perspective but are not well articulated in the press.

The voice of the aged, disabled, and/or the terminally ill are remarkably absent in a story that greatly concerns them. The personal account of someone who has approached Dr. Kevorkian with the intent of assisted suicide remains masked in the authoritative accounting. When patients are mentioned they are briefly positioned through name, age, and disease, but their story is unheard, and they are often couched in ways that make them appear vulnerable or weak, in passive constructions, as in 'the need to ensure protection the the elderly.' In essence, the frame has yet to include people in a way that creates a human face for the social issue: it is still being played out at the level of the institutions and the authority figures of health care.

Other interesting omissions include the disregard for what studies have indicated concerning PAS. Patients who request suicide usually do so from despair over loss of bodily control and isolation, not from pain, yet repeatedly the latter surfaces as fact. Why is the issue of depression not addressed, and how does it speak to our lack of communal focus? Further, the negotiation between depression and/or other mental illness during physical incapacitation is largely constructed as a separate issue, as if the depression were unrelated to the sociophysical condition of the patient. Nor are comparisons made to show the relative percentage of people who die from PAS compared to other 'permitted' deaths - capital punishment (an estimated 12% of death row inmates are retarded), police action, or self-defense shootings. The latter far outnumber the cases of PAS yet remain obscured.

Without an historical base the issues become blurred to the point of invisibility. Where are the legal conflicts that create the nidus for the confusion? What of the pharmaceutical professionals, nurses, and physician assistants? They are integrally related to the practice of PAS and play a significant role, yet they are never mentioned. Also silent are the ethical and political issues: who will regulate PAS and how?; will the aged be viewed differently and, if possible, diminished?; how do the changes in hospital insurance affect this process?; how significant is the conjectured moral relativism and increasing secularization of the U.S. in the negotiation with PAS?

The lexical accounting of Kevorkian that transforms him from mad scientist to renegade to humanitarian, conceals his lack of expertise in emotional disorders, his inability to diagnose patients, and his easy dismissal of the line between PAS and euthanasia. In 1996, he helped a woman commit suicide whose husband had abused her; he admits this was an error, but the news disclosure by this time was overshadowed by the dominant frame of a judicial duel; further, responsibility is removed when the terms shift from criminal charges to benevolent acts such as 'aid-in-dying.' Much of what he represents either stays out-of-frame or is retooled to shape his image until it is replaced by the legal frame.

These are difficult and unsettling aspects; many of these issues are dealt with only in the alternative press and through sites on the Internet. But some of these issues do gain shape in the New York Times - in the accounts of other countries, their foreign status permitting access to the ideologically illicit.

Articles in 1991 tended to use the unspoken practice of PAS in the Netherlands as a cautionary tale for the U.S.; its practices were linguistically set with charged terms to evoke the stereotypical images of drug use and permissive sex in the Netherland's "more openly...permissive society."[65] It was used in accounts of 'disasters' in assisted suicide, euthanasia of elderly and depressed patients who were not otherwise ill that, having happened in a "country with a homogenous, pretty much law-abiding citizenry, almost all of whom have medical insurance,"[66] served to caution against national medical coverage as well as to forewarn of and simultaneously conceal relevant situations that exist in the U.S. Similar reporting of Switzerland admonishes that there are ethical potholes in the practice of

PAS. In Canadian coverage, the voice of the patient is finally unearthed.[67] These elements reinforce a dialectic ideology that resonates in the U.S. but does not readily accommodate our admitted concerns.

Coverage of PAS in Japan took a somewhat disconcertingly humorous look at the practice of *ubasuteyama* - literally the practice of 'mountains to dump a granny,' the former custom of carrying the elderly to mountain peaks to die that was the focus of the movie The Ballad of Narayama.[68] Despite the outward reverence for the elderly in Japan - and other Asian countries - there is also a commitment to the larger social sphere. Thus there is great concern with the rising number of elderly on their island. It is worth noting that due to this concern "Hankyu [a major Japanese clothing conglomerate] recently announced it would prepare for the future by entering the mortuary business"[69]: in Japan the news accounts of economic forces and their intersection with culture are more transparent. In Japan, the emphasis becomes focused on social elements, and refrains of "great conflict" due to lack of "productive workers" in an aging society imbues much of their concern. In general, the use of foreign accountings appears to be a way of negotiating fears without admitting their presence in our own culture; they serve as examples reinforcing our own epideictic discourse.

CONCLUSION

Certain elements stand out. As an official source, Kevorkian was partially able to direct the news frame to mesh with his intent, bringing it from a focus on his activities (events) to a larger cultural domain. The rhetorical stance of the news at present simplifies the judicial proceedings, serving to reassure us of their seamless operation. Religious concerns present a safely contained oppositional voice. Socially significant elements such as the presence of depression in a supposedly well-functioning society are concealed. The government and its capacity to create social programs, such as increases in hospice service, is instead framed as part of the problem. News frames the defiance of societal codes through redefinition ('aid-in-dying'), concealment, or use of the 'Other.'

International reports permit a focus on topics too sensitive to be exposed in our own media, enabling accounts of economic incentives for assisted suicide, the burden of the elderly, or unethical medical practices to surface in a hegemonically safe way.

Foucault's archaeology of Western culture reverberates in the accounts, with his illustration of the controlling force of the physician and the surveillance function of institutions over the general populace (i.e., suicide does not require the assistance of a physician); indeed, the physician and other professional voices clearly dominate the reports, with the concomitant denial of the voice of the patient. Perhaps this accounts for the inaccurate focus on pain alleviation rather than bodily deterioration as a means of curbing PAS: the former is under the control of the health professional.

Also evident is the lack of class or gender as discerning element, reflected in the unanswered issue of misogyny that Kevorkian's primarily middle-aged, female clients suggests. Issues of whether PAS remains a covert practice primarily among the poor or differently abled, or whether its hidden presence reaches to the gold coast floors remain uninvestigated. Only in the alternative press such as the Village Voice, in Internet offerings (the only ready means to acquire Russell Ogden's book, Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide and AIDS, which details interviews as supportive empirical evidence of PAS), or in examination of the international news do these issues gain credence. One can speculate that these are some of the cracks in the ideology.

Complicating the process is the medical frame and its link to science, which performs the function of allowing sensitive issues to be removed from public inspection. Medicine's esoteric nature also ensures that lay-people will more readily submit to technocratic authority. These all cause difficulties for public accounts in the media and create significant gaps in discourse. Thus PAS becomes reified and the individual's impotence heightened: the issue is relegated to institutional authority as an avenue of action, and community is swallowed in narratives that resonate with a focus on individual autonomy while ironically denying it. Where are the raised voices of the AARP and other interest groups in this issue?

Instead of a dialogue that helps expose and clarify issues such as autonomy, the reporting frames reinvigorate paternalistic accounts of the physician or the courts and reinforce the search for a technological cure for what is, at essence, an inescapable aspect of being. And what economic incentives are implicit in the appeal for death to be bound to hospital practice? Further, the lack of appropriate social structure, be that familial or institutional, leads to issues of post-modern conditions that are only weakly supported through the ersatz families of the medical profession. It is a paternalism that sorely eludes our needs. Yet in every case until a female appeared in the company of five other male physicians in March 14, 1997, a photograph accompanying a PAS news article was a close-up of the male physician involved; only alternative press showed photographic elements outside of this frame.

Turow (1985) and Ettema (1991) see mass mediated sites of societal production as "indeterminate and contingent," a process that exposes "both the domination and the struggle of the social system itself"[70]: the assertion of emergent positions is ongoing. But the news constructs medical, judicial, and technical aspects as means of securing those leaks. Obviously controls need to be enacted; we live in a society and have communal responsibilities. But the act of death is deeply personal, and there are, in most cases, reasonable ways to ensure the autonomy of final decisions without invoking the assistance of physicians or other authority figures. The rhetorical strategies that create attributions of rugged individualism in authority figures ironically prevent those closest to the process - the patient - from engaging in the same dialogue.

News reports can create indexical accounts that avoid context, dealing with death in a way that removes it from earnest consideration, presumably narcotizing[71] the audience precisely because the audience is not directly engaged in the subject as presented. The story becomes a pseudo-ritual for specific cases, people whose diseased states make them different from us, represented by other voices and thus skewed by an alien sensibility. Often the news - and our society as a whole - fails to create a bond of concern, as if ends were unintelligible events occurring only to others. These are not events that the New York Times can resolve; they link up to larger interests.

Like many institutions, the newspaper survives on the creation of forward momentum, on an illusion that the news is an eternal story, a tale told from the same spot over time. Death is so foreign to its own abiding structure, the illusion it must maintain to remain culturally and economically viable. Analysis of disturbing events, even though they are of moment, further creates the threat that the topic will ward off customers or, worse, advertisers, so it seems natural that death would be hidden in accountings held within a larger repressive system: "nothing changes and nothing unsuitable will appear."[72] The audience maneuvers: Final Exit was a best seller. But agency is not unlimited. A steep price for this is often paid for by women, by the poor, by the marginalized whose subjugation is bolstered by their silenced voices, and by the general populace that pays in loss of communal focus, distanced from the very dialectic between life and death, so that the experience of death - as well as life - becomes a hidden essence.

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Organizational Rhetoric as Performance Art: A Dramatistic Study of Corporate Communication, Public Relations and Fund Raising

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Organizational Rhetoric as Performance Art:
A Dramatistic Study of Corporate Communication, Public Relations and Fund Raising

The public relations, advertising, and organizational communications of organizations are increasingly vital to their profitability and viability especially in an environment of splintering markets and explosive communication technology.[1] Yet those who study public relations and what some call "organizational rhetoric" (Cheney, 1990) are often puzzled and dismayed by the results of communication choices whether they are advertisements, public relations videos, or fund raising brochures. Why do organizations select a particular communication strategy and reject another? Even more interesting, why do they often choose strategies may be ineffective or even dysfunctional for their organization's success and survival? Through a case study of the public relations, fund-raising, and organizational communication of a not-for-profit organization, this article addresses these questions using symbolic convergence theory (SCT), an approach rarely deployed in examining these activities.[2] The study examines internal and external communication processes as social constructions of reality and argues that the dramas and stories through which organizational members make sense of their organizational world are manifested in the communicative products and processes of the collectivity.

In seeking to understand a particular organization's communicative choices, I briefly review and contextualize the most frequently discussed public relations, fund raising, and organizational communications theories and explain how rhetorical and interpretive approaches to these disciplines may provide useful insights; second, I describe how SCT theory was applied in studying a particular organization's communication activity; third, I review representative empirical data which reveal how and why communications activities emerged as they did within this organization; fourth, I suggest how this approach may be generalized to increase our understanding of persuasive and organizational communication in other firms; and finally, I describe how SCT-based interventions might improve communications effectiveness.

Public Relations, Fund-Raising, and Organizational Communication Research

The most widely discussed public relations theories sprang from a traditional social science paradigm. Until the 1970s, public relations was seen almost solely as communication to persuade, manipulate, or inform certain segments of the public. In an ongoing stream of research, Grunig used a structural-functional approach and proposed that public relations could best be explained by four models which describe how public relations is practiced and that "excellent" and ethical public relations may be seen in a symmetrical model in which publics and groups seek to understand each other and adjust behavior to the benefit of both (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig, 1992). These models have been useful to public relations scholars in providing a structure to examine how different organizations practice their public communication, and as a teaching tool. However, Grunig and others have observed that most organizations do not practice the type of public relations which would be most effective and have concluded that the models are more normative than descriptive (Grunig & Grunig, 1989). Moreover, Grunig has acknowledged that many organizations and PR practitioners do not agree with this view and see public relations as part of the marketing function (Grunig & White, 1992). In the past decade, a wide variety of approaches to public relations research has been proposed. Many focus on PR effectiveness (Stocking 1985; Turk 1985; Grunig & Hunt 1984; Jeffers 1989). Typically in this sort of study PR programs are examined to determine what sort of audience effects resulted, with the emphasis placed on the search for PR variables which may have causal relationships with organizational efficiency or effectiveness.

The literature on fund raising is considerably more limited as Kelly (1995) observed. She points out that the field largely has been ignored by marketing and communications scholars and what little attention has been paid focuses on educational institutions. The desire to understand donor motivations has been predominant (Burke 1988; Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990), and a review of the fund raising literature suggests that little study has been done of eleemosynary institutions and their relationships with publics. Kelly conceptualized fund raising based on Grunig's four models of public relations and found that most organizations do not practice the type of fund raising the models suggest would be most ethical and effective. Like Grunig, she suggests that the "dominant coalition" or top decision-makers of an organization may be the deciding factor in what sort of public relations or fund raising is practiced. Kelly argues that her study provides a descriptive understanding of how fund raising is practiced but calls for more research in understanding why organizations choose various methods and strategies (Kelly, 1995).

While these approaches have broadened our knowledge of organizational rhetoric and public relations, other approaches may offer more holistic explanations for communication behavior and outcomes. Scholars in the interpretive tradition argue symbolism is the essence of an organization and public relations workers participate in the creation of organizational reality and are constrained (and motivated) by the socially-constructed realities they inhabit (Cheney & Dianisopoulous 1989; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell Trujillo, 1983). The rhetorical turn in PR research is reflected in other work such as that of Trujillo and Toth (1986) who suggest that interpretive, functionalist and critical approaches all have useful things to say about PR practice, Elwood's (1995) collection of case studies and Cheney's 1991 case study of the National Council of Bishop's 1983 pastoral letter. The interpretive and rhetorical strains of research reveal that the organizational/PR environment, rather than being something "outside," is largely socially constructed through communication. Recent PR research has adopted a related approach suggesting, through the cultural perspective, that communications activities of an organization are interrelated with its structure, culture and environment (Grunig, 1992). These researchers write they have "found few studies that have made a conceptual link between organizational culture and public relations" (Siramesh, Grunig & Buffington, 1992, 578).

In a similar vein, researchers studying organizational culture have adopted interpretive approaches and documented how sagas, stories and dramas form the basis of organizational values and norms (Clark, 1970, Mitroff and Kilmann 1976, Pfeffer 1981, Boje, Fedor, and Rowland 1982, Gabriel, 1991, Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkin 1983). In contrast to traditional studies of organizational communication and culture which utilized "sender-receiver" models (Sanborn, 1964) or "communication climate" models (McGregor, 1960) these researchers have proposed that stories and dramas are an important means through which members of a collectivity understand and make sense of the world, that these stories carry values and morals, that they can be a tool for organizational success (or a tool for oppressive social control) (Deetz, 1985) and that rhetorical skill--storytelling and dramatic ability--are important managerial skills. Central to this approach is the concept that organizations are constituted by communication and that organizations themselves are symbolic forms.

In related work, marketing communications scholars are increasingly using qualitative methods involving stories, metaphors, and scenario development in order to better understand audiences and consumers (Zaltman, 1995; Steinberg, 1991). Regardless of whether the viewpoint is critical, interpretive, or functional, stories and dramas are seen as potent organizational forces and as means for gaining important insights into collectivities, their members and their audiences.

It should be noted that this study will use the term "PR" as a shorthand for the public communication of the organization. While some public relations scholars cling to the view that public relations must be studied and understood separately from other organizational communication, my study focuses on those who practice PR, a view consistent with the rhetorical and interpretive research traditions. As Miller and Rose point out in regard to the PR definitional debate, "the opinions of those called upon to perform on a day-to-day basis should be taken into consideration" (Miller & Rose, 1994, p. 14). A rhetorical approach shifts the emphasis of study to communications practitioners and their responses to what Bitzer (1968) called the "rhetorical situation. He defined this as "a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence" (Bitzer, 1968, 6). Applied to organizational rhetoric and PR, this definition more accurately reflects what professional communicators actually do every day in their job.[3] Notably, the organization members studied in this research referred to a wide array of communication activities such as media relations, brochure creation, fund raising letters, and the REP quarterly magazine as "public relations."

Research Method

Symbolic convergence theory (SCT) and fantasy theme analysis emerge from small group and rhetorical studies. Properly applied, they can explain how an organization creates the social reality from which its public relations materials emerge. SCT is based on the assumption that communication does not so much reflect reality as create it, and that people make sense of reality through dramatizing. That is, they impose organization and meaning on events. SCT suggests that meanings construed by individuals can "chain out" and create shared meanings among small and large groups of people, such as when audiences listen to a speech or a mass media presentation. A *fantasy theme* is a "creative or imaginative interpretation of events which fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need" (Bormann, 1983, 434). A *fantasy type* is a recurring theme which carries essentially the same message. For scholars in different research traditions, the term "fantasy" may be off-putting. It should be noted that fantasy is a technical term in SCT: It denotes not something imaginary, but rather a way of interpreting events. Fantasy theme analysis has shown its utility in very pragmatic quantitative and qualitative analyses including a strategic marketing intervention with a major agricultural company and as a methodology for designing persuasive political messages (Cragan & Shields, 1992; Cragan & Shields, 1983).

A fantasy theme constitutes a story or narrative that gives meaning to the group's environment and actions. Three types of themes may emerge: 1) script themes which concern the actions major and minor actors perform during the course of a drama; 2) scenic themes which feature the stage whereon the actors perform their roles, complete with props and backdrops; and 3) actor themes which feature the *dramatis personae* of the "play." Actors may be seen as leading women or men, heroic personages, supporting actors, evil-doers, victims and saviors. SCT-based rhetorical criticism is designed to offer understanding of how individuals and groups come to share perspectives, world views, or as Bormann puts it, rhetorical visions. Groups sharing this world view comprise a rhetorical community (Bormann, 1983).

Fantasy theme analysis seems to be a particularly useful methodology for finding linkages between the social reality of an organization and its public relations efforts because patterns may be discovered in both spoken and written discourse. Moreover, SCT's emphasis on the emergence of group consciousness through communication assists the observer in coming to understandings of how shared motivations, emotions, and worldviews contribute to the creation of what counts in that particular group as "good" public relations. This research seeks to show how public relations workers and the organization's dominant coalition respond to and participate in the social reality of the organization.

Research Site and Data Sources

The site for this study was a not-for-profit environmental organization called here the "Regional Environmental Partnership" or REP. Data were gathered over a two-year period and sources included audiotaped focus groups, depth interviews of key employees, and close analysis of the organization's PR and planning documents. In the ethnographic tradition, the researcher also participated in meetings, informal discussions and social events. Founded in 1979, the REP had achieved substantial growth. At the time of the study, the organization employed 26 and had a supporting membership of almost 3,600. The stated mission of the organization is to involve the private sector in the "protection and long-term wise management of the state's natural resources." The REP seeks to protect various types of properties such as wetlands, prairies, and forests through arranging government ownership and management or private ownership with legal safeguards. Within this organizational setting, the primary areas of study involved what may be called "public relations" activities. These included publicity, fund-raising, public education programs, and promotion of special projects. In fact, because of the nature of the organization, its success was and is largely dependent on the success of what may be loosely termed public relations functions. Consequently, a much larger percentage of staff time and resources is expended in what are essentially PR activities as compared with many other organizations, particularly in the for-profit sector. This "public quality" of the organization made it particularly appropriate for studying public relations communication.

The Players

The organization was comprised of three main functional areas. The first group was termed the "administrative group" and was composed of support staff (administrative assistants, the accounting manager, and the office manager/receptionist.) These, for the most part, were well-educated and active participants in REP activities. The second group was the "development group" made up of the director of development ("Hal") and his direct staff reports. The director of development had primary responsibility for fund raising. The third group was made up of the program directors and their manager. These individuals were responsible for proposing and implementing conservation and environmental programs on behalf of the organization. They were also charged with some fund raising responsibilities, but they saw their primary job as performing the "real work" of the organization.

The president of the organization, "Phil," had three direct reports: Hal, the development director, "Barbara" the director of public relations, and "Luke," the programs director. (Citations from the administrative group are identified as "AG" with the transcript page number, from the development group as "DG," and from program directors as "PD." Individual interviews are labeled as such.) The focus groups were set up based on functional areas within the organization with the expectation that those in the same work groups would tend more closely to converge in their perceptions of organization's symbolic world. However, while each focus group revealed many shared meanings, themes which crossed group lines and functional areas also emerged. Moreover, certain similar events and motifs were described by all groups, though frequently a group interpreted an event or assigned motives to actors in different or even mirror-image ways from another group. In the course of analyzing the focus group transcripts, the researcher aimed at examining the problems the group faced in communicating both with internal audiences and with external audiences, including REP donor/members, the board of directors of the REP, and the media. As will be described in greater detail, patterns of fantasy themes emerged and these themes coalesced to reveal two important and competing world views.

As Bormann explains, the messages discovered provide "insights into the group's culture, motivation, emotional style, and cohesion" (Bormann, 1981, 16). The messages not only reveal motives, but through involvement in dramatized events, group members gain motivations and as a result, may change their behaviors. Bormann argues that "the power of symbolic convergence theory to explain the way organizational members make sense of their social and material realities stems from the human tendency to want to understand events in terms of people enacting purposive scenarios" (Bormann, 1983, 102).

An important objective of the focus group exercise was to observe the process of group fantasizing specifically in regard to public relations and communication issues. In the effort to understand the public relations process, research focused on the public relations decision-making fantasy themes and scripts used by the organization, and group members conceptions of their audience(s). This included gaining an understanding of the fantasy types or recurring scripts regarding the decision-making and the scenario-building process for public relations programs. As Bormann points out, a fantasy theme is a narrative about an event occurring outside the here-and-now of the group. It may take place in the present, past or future and the telling and retelling of fantasy narratives may lead to the development of a group fantasy (Bormann, 1986). Scenario-building here refers to the process of imagining the possible impacts of various communicative strategies upon audiences, as well as possible unintended side effects on other groups or publics. Important sources for this research were interviews, observations of formal meetings such as a development planning session, and informal conferences such as encounters in hallways or informal visits to offices of employees. At each level, I was concerned with observing and describing the rhetorical strategies of actors and understanding how these communicative choices are indicative of actors' attitudes and belief systems.

A brief word about the history of the organization will contextualize the themes discussed. The organization was founded by several successful business leaders and government officials who were active hunters and fishermen and considered themselves environmentalists. These "founding fathers" were in a position to personally contribute large sums of money and the founding ethos emphasized cooperation rather than conflict with business and agricultural interests, an opportunistic, action-oriented, and aggressive attitude, and an emphasis on attempting environmental education. The organization was thus personally molded by a few individuals and staffed by those who shared the vision of the environment held by the founders. Among the founders and their followers is a powerful orientation toward pragmatic action in support of "doing good."

The organizational structure of the REP is similar to those found in many establishments identified by Mintzberg as "missionary organizations" in which power is relatively more diffuse and a single dominant coalition does not wield extensive control. (Mintzberg, 1983). For this reason, the fantasies and worldviews of all groups significantly impact communication decision-making. It should be noted that in examining the communication environment of a different sort of organization wherein a more clearly-defined and hierarchical dominant coalition was responsible for most organizational rhetoric, the researcher would need to narrow the study focus somewhat to identify those world views.

Conflicting realities and the public relations process

The following empirical data are representative of recurring patterns identified at the REP. The first section demonstrates how the organization is split into two widely conflicting world views, views I refer to as the "Missionary" and the "Commercial" visions and which have a powerful impact on the form and content of communications materials. As will be shown, the Missionary Vision focuses on the founding purpose of the organization while the Commercial Vision emphasizes the pragmatic and functional activities of the organization.

In the course of research, important fantasies recurred in regard to organizational discord and the process of public relations. What became known as the "OK Corral" is an example of a specific type of fantasy theme, the "inside joke" phenomenon in SCT research. When a group member refers to a previous event using the shorthand of a label or slogan and group members recognize the reference, the inside joke phenomenon has occurred. This brief and often cryptic allusion cues members to recall the shared fantasy complete with the associated emotions and context which originally accompanied the incident (Bormann, 1983). The inside joke compresses a complex and multi-layered incident, revealing important aspects of the organization's social reality. The OK Corral began with the response of a member of the administrative group to a direct mail piece produced by the development department. She sent a memo to Phil (the MEP director) and to Hal (the development director) strongly criticizing the piece for poor grammar and syntax. Hal was upset by the memo and complained to Phil. Luke, director of the program group and the memo-writer's boss, "got his butt chewed" because the memo was written (PD 20).

In a focus group, members described and imagined the consequences of "incompetent" direct mail in the following passage which describes the direct mail writer:

> --We had a little meeting in here a couple of weeks ago in which Hal took exception to a memo I had written criticizing his department's mailings, and told me he thought it was exceedingly harsh. And then, a day later, he met in the coffee room and he apologized for jumping on me in the meeting in front of everyone. And I told him he didn't have to apologize to me because I stood behind every single word on that memo. I didn't--wasn't--backing down a minute from it. And I told him that I thought our direct mail was crucial to our success . . .
>
> --Think what people might think when they saw that. (Laughter, nods of agreement.) (AG 14)

The program director group members also referred to the OK Corral and described the direct mail pieces as badly planned:

> --Some of our direct mail pieces are not--they throw a copy in your box and say "I want this back tomorrow, make all the changes." And it's got all sorts of grammatical errors and things like that in it (PD 20).
>
> --I was more concerned about--about quality. I was very concerned about the process. The process was supposed to be a person in direct mail walking down the hall sitting down with [a program director] and saying what are the issues dealing with trails and streams? You know, what are some things that are going on, uh, or that I should know about or that our donors should know about? Well, we completely jumped over that whole thing. Getting it printed, virtually before anybody ever saw it. So not only were there grammatical errors, but there are--it's not a strong feel, because there's nothing in there that tells me what "Wetlands" are. And so what it did, it broke down that communication again.(PD 20-21)
>
> --Communications is terrible. I sent stuff back. But it's like going into the black hole. You never get anything back.(PD 21).

The development group casts the OK Corral in a decidedly different light, with different heroes and villains. They see themselves as misunderstood, as victims who are ill-treated by employees in other departments. Discussion of the incident developed into a theme of victimization and separation, such as this example from the development focus group:

> --The basic attitude of respect. . . I really get frustrated and upset if I see somebody relating to another person in a very friendly and helpful way--but it . . .they'll treat somebody else though, a minute later totally differently. So it isn't just how they're feeling about their general life or they're having a bad day. It's selective against us, no matter how good a job we do. (DG 24).

The problems which were described about the mailing which triggered the OK Corral incident are seen in two ways by the development group. First, while the director acknowledges that there were typographical errors, he believes that the syntax and grammar criticisms come from people who don't understand the methods of direct mail writing which might use incomplete sentences and similar devices to increase readability and persuasiveness. Second, the criticism is seen as another example of people continuing personal and unfair vendettas against Hal in particular and development in general. In response to the criticism, Hal argues that the results of his group's efforts justify the methods used. In this fantasy, the development group characterizes the audience primarily in terms of its financial utility as identified by response numbers, a viewpoint consistent with those who participate in the Commercial Vision. Consequently, communicative decisions made by development hinge on that group's identification with a wholly different conception of audience and a wholly different conception of organizational objectives than that expressed by the program group.

The OK Corral inside joke is more than a colorful metaphor describing a group conflict. In the telling and retelling of the fantasy, members of different groups are dramatizing their beliefs about the process of organizational communication and their values about what should appear in the REP's materials. As shown in the exchanges provided above, the fantasy type of problematic communicative efforts are cued by reference to OK corral: ("it broke down that communication again") and will likely refer to it again in the future. The OK Corral carries multiple meanings which may be referred to in the shorthand of that label. Within the fantasy, members are agreeing on the sorts of qualifications and backgrounds which a communicator should have and the roles that a development director should play. Group members are dramatizing how conflict is handled in this organization and the way roles are enacted. And, they are imagining an ideal and, in this case, probably disapproving audience for these "poor quality" direct mail pieces. This shows the employees' belief that audiences attend to and respond to the REP's public communication.

In short, they show that the organization members place considerable importance on these materials and their impact on audiences. To them, they are not "just PR;" rather, they are public expressions, at least to some degree, of the employees themselves.

Audience fantasies and the public relations process

Perceived poor quality of development materials is a core fantasy theme among the program and administrative group members and fantasies about quality revolve around each group's construction of REP audiences or publics. In any persuasive communication, consideration of the nature of audiences is a critical part of choice-making in developing rhetorical strategies. In fact, a public relations campaign might be defined as the imaginative projections of the impacts of rhetorical strategies on certain groups of people. In advertising and PR agency conferences, individuals spin out "what if" scripts describing potential audience reactions based on different strategy. For instance, ad agency McCann-Erickson uses a process which involves role playing the potential customer, imagining how she looks, her age, how the product is like to make her fell, and so on (Jeweler, 1992).

Formal PR and marketing research applies social scientific techniques as a way of increasing an organization's understanding of publics and how best to appeal to them. As they segment groups and imaginatively assign values and characteristics to them, PR workers consciously and unconsciously develop persuasive strategies. It should be noted that conceptions of audience composition and message effects, whether entirely subjective or supplemented by outside research, will still be interpreted based on the rhetorical vision or world view in which the conceiver operates. It follows, then, that different groups within the REP imagine markedly different publics which in, in turn, shape their conceptions about the effectiveness and appropriateness of various PR products. The audience fantasies are important aspects of staff evaluations of the communication materials the REP does and should produce. Those participating in the Missionary Vision express a wariness of and emotional distance from publics. Those participating in the Commercial Vision see publics more in terms of categories of likely prospects and results.

Program directors have ambivalent beliefs about MEP publics which are centered mainly on the nature of the materials produced. While the following exchange is ostensibly about audience reactions to materials and the presumed effectiveness of such materials, the discussion quickly returns to the materials themselves. Here a program director gains agreement in his view of audience conceptions:

> --I think our magazine and our calendar goes to a very quality audience. This last year we've been doing a ton of direct mail. And I think--I don't know how this is perceived, but I alone received three [project name] reprimands. You know, and you wonder . . . you talk to people and you know people hate junk mail. It's just like fairly

common. You wonder if we're not starting to fall into that image of being just a producer of junk mail. I don't know, but I have some concerns about that . . .(PD 22)

The fantasy shared above also reveals and reinforces the split between the Missionary and Commercial visions by identifying the magazine as going to a "quality" audience and implicitly suggesting that "junk mail" would offend this sort of audience. The individuals sharing this fantasy imagine a quality audience and then express skepticism about the quality of the development fund raising materials. The conversation moves on to more direct mail generalities and the skill of those produced by the REP. In this example, as in the "OK Corral" group members are dramatizing how conflict is handled in this organization and the way roles are enacted. And, they are imagining an ideal and, in this case, probably disapproving audience for these "poor quality" communication materials.

In the case of both groups it should be noted that their conceptions of audience had hardened into belief systems which tended to discount or ignore much outside data about audience characteristics. Membership survey data had provided more objective information about audience demographics and preferences for the REP's focus which suggested certain thematic and public relations choices were more desirable than others. The magazine, quarterly newsletters, and limited direct mail were seen as acceptable. Certain themes and programs were perceived as more urgent than others. Yet these data were rarely referred to in focus groups on scenario development and audience concepts. Only the PR director acknowledged these data and she felt the need to interpret them in terms of the needs and beliefs of REP members.

In analyzing focus group transcripts, it became clear that program group members identified very little with audiences and very intensely with the organization's mission and purpose. The statement "I don't have a high degree of confidence that those donors [gained by direct mail] are gonna be with us a long time" expressed a fantasy of doubt which elicited considerable agreement among group members. For program directors participating in the Missionary Vision, audiences are outsiders and donors are individuals who must be catered to, wooed, and patronized. Because such people are not part of the inner circle, they are hard for program directors to visualize in a vivid and clear way. As will be seen, the PR and information materials program directors produce also reveal their preoccupation with projects (mission) and their relative lack of identification with and understanding of REP publics.

The Missionary Vision: A Dominant/Dysfunctional Social Reality for Organizational Rhetoric

Because of employees' identifications with the organization's public expression, it is not surprising that intense and emotional dramas can revolve around such supposedly objective activities as direct mailing solicitations and the quantified results from these efforts. For those participating in the Missionary rhetorical vision, the texts (PR materials) emerging from the organization should accurately communicate "the Word." There is a sense that anything that emerges from the organization should qualify as a sacred text. Bormann describes rhetorical visions as having a "master analogue" which captures the essence of the vision. The Missionary vision's analogue is "righteous" concerned with what is just and unjust, moral or immoral (Cragan & Shields, 1992). For those in the development group, materials emerging from the organization should, first and foremost, produce desired financial results regardless of the form they take and the master analogue is pragmatic.

The REP's audiences were particularly critical for it at this time because of problems stemming from recent funding shortfalls and the requirement to focus on raising money rather than doing good works. Yet frequently among the program director group, the fantasy of a more glorious past was dramatized. In those days, the group said, the organization was very "opportunistic–which is not bad" (PD 2). This fantasy theme articulation elicited considerable agreement from group members:

> That's how we started this organization. Very opportunistic and we very consciously moved into trying to create our own worlds, and interests, and projects. And I think when in some ways we moved in that direction without a lot of control on us, we got into a lot of things. . .(PD 2).

This fantasy dramatizes a history wherein individuals were environmental lone rangers, unfettered by controls from boards of directors, or bosses, or fund-raisers. These were environmental champions, striking off on missions to help the environment or to spread the word. This fantasy type of the program group as people of action and environmental champions is a core fantasy. This theme triggered a contrasting theme wherein the group related stories about a campaign to raise money for a specific shortfall. These stories call up images of increasing controls by the board of directors and executive director, dilution and lack of clarity of the mission, and frustration at the lack of consistency in planning and fund raising. In the group's perception, planning and fund raising were conducted haphazardly and were disorganized. Following is an example that drew considerable agreement from PD group members:

> --We've become so data oriented that we're--we're just like we're in chains right now. We're always waiting for something else. Now this does not have to be a complicated process. Just give me the ten [donor] names and we'll sit down and talk about 'em. And it you're the best one to make the call . . . we need someone to make that decision. That's still a real frustrating part of the process (PD 6).

The program directors dramatize their concerns about the mission in relating a story about a fund raising program which has put certain high potential donors off limits to them and describe the process in angry metaphors: [it's] "been bastardized, hybridized, or aborted, or whatever term you want to use" (PD 9). They go on to express the following theme:

> It's like the organization has been kind of turned upside down or at least tipped on its side. And I hear a lot of staff commenting, and even Phil [the director] with people saying "now the most important thing we have to do is raise money." The most important thing that we're supposed to be doing is doing our job (PD 9).

In the theme cited above, group members see themselves trapped in a hostile scene and the spatial metaphor ("tipped upside down") suggests the sense of confusion and disarray which characterizes the organization's reality. The story also reveals how the hostile scene has shaken the self concepts of organization members, and here the intrusion of the world view of the development group is seen. For program directors, the need for fund raising is sullying their high purpose, yet the urgencies of funding shortfalls persist and must be dealt with. Thus a second core fantasy type is that the Mission is sacred. The sacred quality of the mission suggests that the pursuit of money tends to sully its high purpose.

The development group expresses an almost mirror image belief regarding the roles of the program directors and their commitment to the mission. They see the program directors as indulging in individual heroics:

> They [program directors] have their favorite programs and decide they're going to do something. I mean, we can't even come up with a consensus on the mission. That's because some people have a vested interest in not having consequences. They want to be the hero and build their own relationships and get personal rewards and recognition. I think if you're gonna write it, [PR and corporate communication], write it for the organization, not just for yourself. Hal (personal communication March 30, 1993)

This notion of the program directors having a false calling vis-a-vis the mission also becomes clear in the Development Group focus group. The following interchange dramatizes that sense:

> --The reasoning--the reason for doing a project .. . it's not a love to do it anymore. It's not that they feel in their gut that it needs to be done . . .
>
> --Where they can be a hero. Not necessarily the organization. Where can an individual staff or person or Board member be a hero. It's not based on the REP needs. (DG 3).

In this exchange, the program directors are cast as selfish political operators seeking self-aggrandizement, not the altruistic environmental heroes of the fantasy themes expressed above. Again, this mirror-image interpretation of the environmental champion fantasy type reveals participation in a distinct social reality as well as the fragmentation of the organization.

The most passionate expressions of purpose and mission emanated from the program group. In these mission discussions, group members reveal their beliefs about the relationship of human beings with the natural environment and about the most effective ways to accomplish goals. In interviews and focus group session, all groups reiterated that the mission revolved around the protection of nature, the need for public/private partnerships, and the need for educating or raising awareness of the public about the area's environment. One core fantasy type characterizes the environment as requiring management or protection and another supports the belief that the MEP could and should lead the public to the proper knowledge and beliefs about the environment.

In general, there is a paucity of fantasies in the development group in regard to mission (purpose), a clue that the rhetorical vision in which most of this group's members dwell is that of the Commercial Vision. A metaphor which was first used by Hal, the development director, which ultimately chained among the development group, was that of development as the engine which powers the car (the organization):

> That's important [programs and projects], but it's not what makes it go. It's like the fund raising is the engine. I mean, I know you can't run it without wheels, and stuff, but nobody sees the engine Hal (personal communication March 30, 1993) .

This metaphor/fantasy theme dramatizes Hal's beliefs that too much emphasis has been placed on the programs and projects and insufficient importance has been accorded to development activities and contributions to the organization as a whole. The fantasy theme relates very powerfully to the pragmatic means of carrying out the mission. Moreover, the automobile metaphor possesses evocative meanings: The car is a tool, a symbol of speed, science, and bureaucratized modern Western social life.

Among the participants in the Commercial Vision (generally the development group), fantasies chain much more readily about the processes and problems of fund raising rather than the nature of the mission. An exchange which took place in the development focus group in discussing a direct mail plan reveals the scientistic and technical orientation to their exchanges:

> --Paralleling the strategy that we've laid out, and the hierarchy of types of list . . .we re look [sic] at what's pulling . . . and where it's bidding in the hierarchy. So they're doing lots of data analysis . . . (DG pp. 8-9)

Clusters of similar terms characterize this exchange and those which follow it: "computer data," "hierarchy," "data analysis," "automate," and "paralleling strategies" are all terms which provide clues to a scientistic and secular fantasy about the nature of members' jobs. Not only does the use of marketing and computer jargon reveal participation in the Commercial Vision, it also serves to reinforce members' "groupness" and the relatively arcane knowledge they have among them. In that sense, it is a form of cultural cement, revealing the social knowledge and past experiences which they share, and the special skills they have which identify them as "competent members" (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983, 143). The group members identify with organizational objectives based on members' participation in the Commercial Vision.

Of course, the mirror-image interpretations of roles and events depicted in the contrasting fantasy themes suggest disjunction and fragmentation in themselves. In addition, however, specific fragmentation and conflict themes appear in discussions of participants of both groups. Group conceptions about the communication process underscore disjunctions in the organization, vastly different conceptions of audience, and deeply conflicted viewpoints about what communicative venues and messages are appropriate for the REP. As has been discussed, program directors produce brochures and materials and the development group creates and sends out direct mail campaigns. But roles and areas of responsibility are not clearly defined. Despite these issues, the development group, the REP leader, and the PR director must somehow devise communication materials which satisfy the need to raise money, which are conceived and executed without tipping off outsiders that conflict exists, and which do not offend important constituencies.

Dysfunctional realities: Public relations products

The chief executive and the professional communicators of an organization occupy special positions which allow them greater influence than most organization members in shaping the formal and informal communication and thus the realities of the organization (Bormann, 1983). Dozier (1990) generalized PR worker roles into that of the manager, who has substantial policy input and decision-making power, and that of technician, one who implements strategies developed by others in the organization. The primary PR person in the REP has responsibilities which take her into both role types and call for a complex series of strategies and responses to the REP rhetorical community.

Phil, the REP CEO, has been in that position since its inception. Interviews and observation indicate his authority is predicated on his close association with the founders of the organization. Phil is concerned with the increased bureaucratization of the REP and is frustrated by the exigences created by recent shortfall in funds, and profoundly upset by the internal conflicts. Phil mourns for the early days and reveals his identification with the Missionary Vision. Yet he feels the obligation to respond to the funding problems. He is struggling to participate in the conflicting rhetorical vision and his ambivalence has appeared to dilute his leadership ability. He has created a situation in which all groups are uneasy with his motives and capability. Examples from focus groups reveal this problem in character-based fantasy themes: "Phil doesn't let anybody know anything that's going on. I don't have a clue." "Phil doesn't like to deal with he staff. And Phil brought a relationship that none of us can identify . . ." "We can't have any criticism of Hal without Phil just jumping down your throat." Character fantasies about Luke, the head of the program directors, reveal how most of the administrative and program group see the differences: "We trust in Luke" and "In my opinion, Luke *is* the REP." The groups dramatize an ambivalent persona for Phil and though he is the putative leader of the REP, his authority is formal rather than charismatic. The fantasy that the group "trusts in Luke" is interesting in its quasi-religious connotation. Moreover, the statement "Luke is the REP reveals Luke's total identification with the mission of the REP in the eyes of other employees and is an often-repeated fantasy type.

Both the organizational leadership and members have seen the Missionary rhetorical vision weakened as budget shortfalls occurred and they have been unable to generate fantasy themes and visions which are compelling and integrative. However, the exigences the organization faces demand communication with internal and external audiences despite its internal turmoil and somehow members must piece together communication materials which address the REP's needs to increase membership and raise money. It is in this area that Barbara, the person primarily responsible for PR, comes to the fore.

Barbara occupies multiple roles and performs multiple functions in the organization and she manages these diverse activities with considerable rhetorical and political skill. She roams across functional and formal organizational borders and is a "boundary spanner." Boundary spanners are usually characterized as effective workers in their own areas who are also important to other work groups and areas (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). They are seen as helping to link diverse groups inside the organization and providing similar linkages to outside constituencies. The PR person occupies this position in most organizations and is so described in most PR textbooks. For instance, Newsom et al (1983) suggest that PR workers act to interpret institutions to publics and vice versa.

Also included in her responsibilities are speech-writing, review and contributions to direct mail materials, development of major campaign themes, and so on. Barbara sees herself as relatively unaffiliated with any group in the organization and she carefully works to avoid conflict. She is seen in a positive light by all the groups, but she admits that it is a matter of continual effort and importance for her to "get along with everybody" because "I'm a one-man turf." Through the figure of the "one-man turf" she reprises the fantasy type of warring camps, sequestered physically in the office environment and separated ideologically as well. The fragmentation of the organization has very real consequences for her job as she attempts to distill a compelling and coherent message from the farrago of beliefs and realities which constitute the REP.

In the case of Barbara, the importance of individual PR workers' "impression management" skills, to use Goffman's term, is highlighted (Goffman, 1958). As the primary designated communicator in the organization, Barbara has, along with upper management, a special and significant role in the reality-creating business. Despite her attempts to stay above the fray, she must produce materials which emerge from the REP's rhetorical visions, which conform to the world views of influential employees, and which do not offend important constituencies. All of these requirements must be satisfied before the presumably larger requirement, that being to persuade the primary audience for each communications piece. The production of symbolic materials, then, is furiously contested terrain.

Two critical issues for public relations success emerge from the cultural social reality of the REP. First is the issue of fragmentation and its effect on the PR and fund raising process. The second is the problematic role of the practitioner in reconciling and satisfying competing world views in the public expression of the organization while still managing to achieve the results needed and expected for institutional success. Through participation in a certain rhetorical vision, the strategic communicative choices available to actors are made salient, manageable, and constrained. Herbert Simon (1976) called this the "environment of decision" and contends that a decision-maker's attention is focused on selected alternatives based on her identification with organizational objectives. Similarly, but more completely, an explanation of the rhetorical vision in which the communicator/ decision-maker participates can provide a more holistic explanation of the choices and premises available to her.

REP Public Communications: Tokens of their authors

Ernest Bormann writes that "The fossilized remains of shared group fantasies can be found in texts of oral or written messages in the form of fantasy themes or fantasy types" (Bormann, 1981, 51-52). For purposes of this study, REP communication was studied to identify what relationships, if any, exist between the rhetorical visions which characterize the organization and the public communications it produces. In the tradition of rhetorical criticism, I will also briefly comment on the effectiveness of the communication and how successfully REP communication adheres to principles of form. Rybacki and Rybacki refer to this as the aesthetic component of rhetorical criticism and write that the "focus of aesthetic judgment is on how a set of rhetorical principles concerning its form facilitated the acts ability to achieve its purpose (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, 35). Cragan and Shields (1992) refer to this as fantasy theme artistry.

My analysis was also informed by Kenneth Burke who observed that the work of a writer will reveal "associational clusters" and patterns of relationships. Burke observes that an author may be aware of using certain stylistic techniques and imagery in order to achieve desired effects such as persuasion. However, she may be unaware of patterns of symbols and relationship which emerge and a critic can discover and analyze (Burke, 1957). Burke explains the linkage between situation and motives:

> There is no need to "supply" motives. The interrelationships themselves are his (sic) motives. For they are his situation; and situation is but another word for motives. The motivation out of which he writes is synonymous with the structural way in which he puts events and values together when he writes; and however consciously he may go about such work, there is a kind of generalization about these interrelations that he could not have been conscious of since the generalization could be made by the kind of inspection that is possible only after the completion of the work (original emphasis) (Burke, 1957, 18).

The project of delineating these situations and motivations was illuminated by the focus groups, interviews and field observations described previously though it is complicated by the corporate nature of organizational authorship. What tokens of a work's creators are lodged in the words and images? What associational clusters reveal the fingerprints of multiple writers? What are the results of multiple or conflicting motivations/situations? What patterns will be revealed through the work of an individual writer who must satisfy multiple audiences and objectives?

An overview of the communication produced by the MEP provides some perspective for the close analysis which follows. Notably, the sheer numbers and diversity of materials produced appear to relate to the fragmented and unfocused organizational character revealed in the fantasy themes and rhetorical visions described previously. During the time period covered in this study (six months during 1992 and 1993), the organization was disseminating or producing at least 25 different printed items to promote individual programs, "educate" donors, or to promote the organization as a whole. Also at that time, at least 20 different direct mail solicitations and "thank you" pieces were being used. During 1992 approximately 50 news releases were generated by the MEP, speeches were given, meetings held, individual fund-raising efforts undertaken, and four issues of the organization's magazine produced. Some of the numbers cited above are approximate because organization members themselves were unsure of the counts. This resulted from the tendency of individual program directors to initiate their own communication efforts as well as from the lack of an overall direction or evaluation process for the communication of the organization.

Three examples reveal much about the organization and are representative of the dozens of PR/development materials which received close analysis. The first is a brochure jointly created by Barbara and the program director for the Clearwater Streams program.

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The piece was printed on gray, speckled paper in two colors, black with teal accents. It is an 81/2 x 11 inch three-fold piece with one back panel devoted to response with spaces for name, address and phone and several suggested giving levels. The remainder of the piece is copy with one small graphic, a map of the region.

> Imagine narrow stream valleys filled with wildlife, surrounded by dark green woodlands and fern-covered hills. Imagine majestic rocky palisades and bluffs. Imagine a place where crystal-waters bubble and rush over limestone cobbles and beds of watercress . . .Imagine a sudden flash of olive, orange, and white followed by a gentle splash as a brook trout sips an emergent mayfly from the mirror-like surface of a pool. Imagine a . . . program dedicated to protecting and enhancing coldwater streams and the beautiful valleys which surround them. Dream no more. The Regional Environmental Partnership has such a program. This privately-funded program works directly with . . .landowners to help care for and improve the quality of their streams.

The copy makes an awkward transition from the "imagine" motif and its scenic emphasis to a description of the program it tries to address. The tone of the copy shifts abruptly from florid prose to pedantic and fact-filled writing:

> [Our] spring-fed streams, once teeming with brook trout, have suffered a serious decline in quality. Fewer than five . . . streams now continue to sustain wild trout populations. Declining stream quality reflects the environmental condition of the land. Working together, we can improve stream quality and maintain the productivity of the land.

Throughout this brochure, fantasy themes appear and strategies recur which are found in almost all REP communication. The moral obligation to protect, improve and enhance water quality is an obligation not to an ideal of nature or to a wilderness ethic, but rather an obligation to preserve an environment for successful human use. This is consistent with the "founding fathers" mission of cooperation and partnership. A second fantasy type dramatizes the notion that people, if properly directed and educated will appreciate nature and will act in positive ways for a common goal. A third fantasy type relates to the power of human effort and agency to shape the future. In this theme, nature is not only protected, it can be "enhanced" through wise human action. A related theme conceives of nature as both a ward and servant of human beings--something which people can and should utilize for their benefit but which also should be protected and nurture. These fantasy themes relate to the core fantasy types which emerged in focus group discussions: the belief that the environment must be protected and the conviction that environmental champions can lead the way to such protection.

The brochure is not a rhetorical success for several reasons. The phrasing is distant, preachy and stilted as seen in such lines as "personally assists landowners wishing to improve stream management" and "encouraging public participation and appreciation." Second, the brochure seems to be educational until the reader turns to the back panel where

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she is asked to contribute money. There is no preparation for that pitch and the effect is jarring. Because the copy shows little understanding of the target audience, its strategies are not sharply focused and there is an emotional distance between the writer and the reader. The power of the Missionary Vision and its component of uneasiness with raising funds plays a significant part in diluting the effectiveness of the streams brochure. It demonstrates how a powerful cultural vision and world view can sabotage a persuasive effort. In fact, the seeds of this sabotage are embedded in the rhetorical vision itself, a vision which excludes non believers and has an essential contempt for the fund raising process. This distaste for raising money was seen clearly in the focus group interactions as well. While the Missionary Vision is a potent force within the organization, this brochure fails to effectively dramatize that vision for outsiders.

Although the development group participated in a different and competing rhetorical vision from that of other REP groups, the communication materials which they produced recapitulate similar themes as those in PR and program materials. The following piece is typical:

> As a member, you are the backbone of the regional environmental partnership. Last year alone, your membership helped permanently protect and enhance 2,500 acres of countryside. You helped plant and nurture trees in more than 250 . . .communities and rural areas. You helped open or complete 54 miles of conservation/recreation trails. You saved wildlife nesting and resting areas. You made all this possible, plus many other outstanding innovative projects.
>
> You have enabled thousands of residents and visitors to enjoy an improved quality of life. Children, teachers, landowners, community leaders, outdoor folks, and many who aren't yet aware of the REP's leadership role have al benefited. Every week we get more request [sic] for urgently needed assistance. Businesses agencies and individual turn to the REP to save threatened natural areas, to bridge the gaps in environmental education, and to give vision to their long-range planning. Since the REP relies on private contributions, our members make it possible to act on these opportunities. This is a reminder that you [sic] membership payment of $[amount] is due. If you would like to change your annual pledge amount, just cross out the total pledged amount on the enclosed pledge form and replace it with a new amount. The greater your investment, the greater the result for [our region].

Familiar fantasy types of the Missionary Vision appear in the letter. One such theme is that the wise leadership of the REP is able to coordinate group action in order to achieve a better quality of life for state residents. Businesses, agencies and individuals are dramatized as appealing to the REP for guidance and counsel; nature is again envisioned as threatened and requiring protection. The environment is seen primarily in terms of its utility for human beings. The world for the writers of this letter is a place where cooperation will result in tangible benefits. Success is measured in terms of projects accomplished, acres protected, and trails established. In the fantasy themes of the letter, people can be relied on to cooperate and do good--when they are effectively led.

Rhetorically this letter is not successful. While the fantasy themes expressed are those of the Missionary Vision, the letter fails to effectively dramatize those themes in citing the accomplishments and the vision of the REP. Effective rhetoric is specific and vivid: the rhetoric in the letter above is vague and general. In addition, as Hart (1990) observes, drama is dependent on conflict. The writer of the letter fails to set up and emotionalized problem and solution to which the reader can respond. The "threats" which the REP seeks to meet are weak and insubstantial in the text. The letter suggests that the member's contribution was significant to the projects accomplished by the REP. Burke observes that identification and persuasion are related in that "a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests" (Burke, 1969, 46). In order to achieve this persuasive effect, however, he writer would need to effectively dramatize the interests that the audience might share with the organization. However, consistent with both the Commercial and the Missionary Visions, the focus is inward, not outward toward audiences.

A final example is a letter from the REP's chairman of the board which was created in a cooperative effort among the Barbara, Phil, Luke and the Chairman. It appeared in the magazine issue which doubled as the annual report.

> For all the right reasons.
> A true source of strength for the REP is that it is driven for the right reasons: proven programs to protect [region's] resources. We are not preoccupied with process, white papers and public relations ginned up in a [downtown] office building. The emphasis is on doing what needs to be done across the [region] . . . saving lake shores and coldwater streams, preserving precious prairies, restoring wetlands, planting trees, and teaching kids and adults about conservation ethics. We are especially fortunate to have a motivated staff who plan and manage these programs so well. These are women and men who are enthused, knowledgeable, inclusive and passionate about their work. Our directors and members owe the staff our thanks for giving daily meaning to the REP's purpose and dreams.
> I hope you, too, share my excitement about the REP. Imagine for a moment the the thousands of . . . residents who care enough about our corner of the world to give their time and money to the REP's important work. Your contribution makes you an integral part of a truly unique, extremely effective organization.
> As you read this annual report, take pride in the REP's achievements of the past year--for they are your achievements as well. Thank you.

This message is clearly an expression of the Missionary Vision. The headline "For the Right Reasons" emphasizes the purpose of the organization. Purpose and mission are embedded in deeds: the mission and righteousness are not found in documents, books or abstract ideas; rather, the mission is found in important words of the first paragraph: "saving," "preserving," "restoring," "planting," and "teaching." The REP heroic persona is characterized by hard-headed empiricism, impatience with abstractions, and disdain for process, white papers, and public relations. The organization is successful because it is "effective." That is, it can point to a list of concrete observable achievements which constitute success. In the rhetorical vision of the REP, righteous things happen because wise, good, and practical people make them happen; nature can be managed and even improved. Although the mission is embodied in human action, this embodiment does not dilute the vision's righteous master analogue. Higher purpose, for the Missionary Vision, is served by wise action for the benefit of current and future generations. The pragmatic aspects of the mission are in how the higher purposes are accomplished, not in the overall character of the vision.

The copy seeks identification by assuring the reader that she is part of the action, one of the doers who make good things happen. The reader is encouraged to "take pride in the REP's achievements of the past year--for they are your achievements as well." But although the document this message introduces is an annual report which mostly involves reporting the current financial situation, the message says little about the critical ingredient which makes programs happen: money. Only in the third paragraph does the copy allude to money and then only in the most oblique way. Gingerly, the writer seeks to achieve identification with readers by aligning them with the mission, assuming they subscribe to the vision, and suggesting that a monetary contribution may be enough to allow them to be a part of the good works. But again, the fantasy type that raising money is profane is reprised and another essential disjunction for the organization is revealed: The Missionary Vision valorizes action, not passivity, doing, not discussing, and presumably participating, not just donating. The identification attempt and persuasion is likely to fail because the organization's rhetorical vision as expressed in the magazine offers no comfortable niche for fund raising. Moreover, the rhetorical effort is so oblique as to be missed by the casual reader and it fails to dramatize needs in terms likely to stir the emotions of readers. Clarity, emotional involvement, and the need to operate within the experiential background of the target audience are key requirements for fund-raising success, and these elements are inadequately developed (Lewis, 1987).

Bormann reminds us that fantasy themes and rhetorical visions have life spans–they emerge, thrive, and decay. Some dramatizations have much more power than others and the staying power of the Missionary Vision is substantial. Those who are writing for REP audiences are attempting to initiate fantasies within the vision which respond to the exigences of financial and internal struggle. As Bormann puts it, those at the top and the PR people are trying to "communicate the big picture and create a consciousness of community and commonality among members . . ." (Bormann, 1983, 121). However, dramatizing the Missionary Vision to outsiders is no easy task.

Media coverage, news releases, brochures and dozes of other communication vehicles reprise themes consistent with the Missionary Vision. Several findings emerged from these close textual analyses. First, the Missionary Vision was surprisingly pervasive: fantasy types which relate to that vision appeared in every piece of communications material reviewed, whether is was created by the PR director, program directors, or development. The Missionary Vision is so strong internally that it may even by dysfunctional for the organization as it prevents it from successfully dramatizing organizational objectives, gaining followers, and winning donations.

A second and related finding involves the reliability of an organization's public speech as an indicator of culture. Foss writes that "Motives are observable through the way in which a rhetor uses rhetoric because the structure of an artifact is the structure of the rhetoric's personal framework for viewing the world" (Foss, 1989, 286). Although the organization may be trying to put its best face forward in public communication, this analysis suggests that public speech may be a reliable indicator of the motives and world views of an organization. Fantasy types first identified in focus group sessions appeared in markedly similar ways in the materials produced by the PR area, the program area, and the development area. Moreover, it appears those participating within the Missionary Vision hold the power to make their version of reality stick for the public communications of the organization. The Commercial Vision's existence is only identifiable in a few areas, most particularly in the form of the direct mail package. This indicates that the Missionary Vision, though under stress, is still the dominant world view of most organization members. While it is being reinterpreted and redramatized to sustain members' commitment and symbolic convergence, it maintains its essential elements (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991).

A third finding which emerged in textual analysis was the uneven rhetorical skills revealed. The program brochure and the direct mail letter were not rhetorically skillful: They lacked focus and specificity, emotional appeals did not dramatize reasons for giving, and in the case of the letter, typographical errors further undermined its impact. The material under the direct control of the PR director showed a relatively high level of rhetorical skill and sophistication with well-written copy, professional use of graphic images, and a fairly strong focus. However, this organization-wide uneven quality of materials is indicative of the fragmentation and lack of central planning characterizing the REP's communication activities.

This brings up a fourth finding which involves the nature of effective persuasion. For such communications to be compelling and persuasive, those who communicate must dramatize the vision and induce others to participate in it. The organization has largely failed to do this. As mentioned earlier, part of the problem is the Missionary Vision: the desire for compromise among groups, to avoid conflict and achieve harmony, a managerial rhetoric, does not make for high drama. Compelling emotional dramas require a threat or villain. As Larson notes, "the potential converts must feel dissatisfied with things as they are and must be willing to dream of things as they might be" (Larson, 1987, 283). In the case of the REP, no vivid threat has been articulated and not clear vision of the better alternative future has been offered. Interestingly, some of the REP employees seem to be aware of this deficiency: one of the focus groups agreed the REP projects don't have "sex appeal" (AG 4). Bormann believes the conduct of successful persuasive campaigns involves contributing to the involvement and identification of individuals with the rhetorical vision of the communicators by developing and deploying skillfully designed messages featuring compelling scenarios or fantasy themes (Bormann 1981, 59). Despite the sincere efforts of the program, PR, and development groups at the REP, this was rarely achieved.

Concluding remarks

This study grew out of a desire to understand how the public communication of an organization was accomplished. It concludes with the belief that PR products are shaped and constrained by the rhetorical visions and fantasies of organization members as they respond to changing exigences. Companies and organizations do not practice the kind of PR or organizational rhetoric they "should"--rather, they practice the kind of PR they *must* based on the social world in which their members dwell. The case study discussed in this article extends fantasy theme analysis and public relations/fund raising theory in several ways.

First, it applies the methodology to a rhetorical situation (public relations and fund raising) which has not been done previously. The use of a dramaturgical model reveals the nature of the communications decision-making environment from actors' points of view, taking into account holistically the roles, organizational structure, and power relations within the organization. A related advantage of a dramaturgical model is that it avoids some of the extremes of different research traditions: it argues that human action is influenced but not determined by various sorts of environmental or structural factors. In other words, it strikes a middle ground between those who insist that there is a knowable objective reality out there and those who argue that reality exists only in people's heads. Moreover, it helps to explain the failure of the mainstream structural/functional public relations research to establish a predictive model for PR or organizational rhetoric.

Second, the study addresses the seemingly nonrational choices made by organizations. SCT encourages us to understand collectivities not so much as rational, linear, goal-oriented entities, but as rhetorical communities created by symbolic, communicative interactions. As Bormann (1983) and Foss (1989) have pointed out, actions which are bewildering to outsiders are entirely sensible to those inhabiting a rhetorical community. Hence, while the public relations choices made by organizational communicators may be ineffective or even damaging when considered from the standpoint of goal achievements, they are fulfilling a rhetorical need for the group.

Third, the results from this study of the REP suggests that the public narratives of an organization may be relatively reliable in providing insights into the perspectives, motives, and values which characterize the dominant social reality of that organization. Researchers in organizational culture long have struggled with the problem of how best to study and discover these cultures. Frequently, practical problems of corporate secrecy, limited or prohibited access to employees and documents, or simply the time needed to conduct studies of large organizations have frustrated researchers. In the REP, the Missionary Vision was in conflict with the Commercial Vision, yet its primary values dominated the organization. Studies of organizations of different size and character could be conducted to test the reliability of public relations materials as indicators of culture.

Fourth, the study seems to suggest that organizations might benefit from a researcher's intervention in the process of communication creation. Mangham (1979), Putnam (1983), and others have suggested that alienating workers from their rhetorical visions and making them aware of the possible dysfunctional aspects of their rhetorical community and rhetorical visions can offer them the opportunity to process and accept different realities. In addition, those with specific responsibilities for designing and deploying persuasive materials could use knowledge gained from fantasy theme analysis to better understand target audiences and create more compelling messages for those audiences.

Finally, the methodology suggests an additional method for tracking public relations and organizational influence. This study of the REP suggests that fantasy types can be identified through close reading or content analysis of textual material. Once such fantasy types are identified (for example, in news releases), it would be possible to examine media stories based on the releases and identify which themes and motifs appeared and which did not. Similarly, it would be possible to study media coverage of news conferences and speeches for evidence of fantasy chaining. For the public relations practitioner, this would provide systematic and structured evidence that desired themes and messages were appearing in target news media, thus providing richer qualitative information than that provided by quantitative measurements such as column inches or numbers of times an organization's name appeared in media. Researchers attempting to identify the influence of public relations on news media content and public policy could

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track appearance of themes from news release creation to news media appearance, to public documents and speeches.

Based on this study, organizational rhetoric--PR and fund raising-- may be thought of as emerging from layers of performances, fantasy theme sharing, and rhetorical visions. Routine organizational fantasy themes and plots order everyday activities and PR workers fit new events into those familiar scripts. This study extends the venerable dramatistic metaphor to a description of how people and organizations communicate. The communicative interactions of real people imaginatively interpreting events and exigences in terms of motives, scripts and characters are the essence of organizational life and the wellspring of formalized organizational communication. PR process and products are not determined by organizational structures (though they may be constrained by them,) by environmental factors (though such factors may create rhetorical exigences), or by objective, rational planning (though organization members may consider this a prime value). Rather, PR and fund raising communications flow from the interactions and shared realities negotiated through language and symbols.

Notes

[1] Numerous business publications, scholars and practitioners have noted this trend. Some of the following sources may be useful : Schultz, D. E., Tannenbaum, S. I. & Lauterborn, R. F. (1992) Integrated marketing communication; and Davidow, W. H. & Malone, Michael S. (1993) The virtual corporation.

[2] The notion of using Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory and fantasy theme analysis for public relations research is one which I first proposed in 1991 (Duffy) and operationalized in this study conducted from 1992-1993. Vasquez (1993) proposed a related approach using SCT in concert with Grunig's situational theory and offered a hypothetical situation in which it might be applied.

[3] Bitzer said that the rhetorical situation was "a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence" (Bitzer, 1968, 6). The term exigence (a form of the word "exigency") suggests an urgent or pressing situation and emphasizes the singularity and special qualities which characterize each such situation. Rephrased to accommodate public relations, an alternative definition for public relations emerges: public relations activity is a response to a complex of persons, events, objects and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence for an organization which can be completely or partially removed if instrumental organizational discourse can so constrain or motivate human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence.

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Heroes, Villains & Twice-Told Tales:
The Normative Power of Journalism's Worklore

by

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It is no small question to ask what shapes those who *shape the daily* news report. Why events are chosen for dissemination by the news media, what facts are selected for a story, and the ways those facts are collected, assembled, and framed have significant impact on how we see and respond to the world around us. Yet while scholars over the years have examined the products of journalism in myriad ways, comparatively little attention has been focused on the worker culture of the journalists themselves.[1]

This research focuses on how the profession's heroes and villains and its worklore help create and sustain the work culture of journalists. Its purposes are twofold. One is to suggest a methodology for examining – and offer a preliminary analysis of – the influence of the craft's lore and mythic figures. The second objective is to promote a research agenda for scholarly investigation of journalism's worklore.

A review of the literature indicates that one of the least-studied areas of the news workplace is the creation of the professional culture of journalists, how it is sustained, and how those influences on the worker culture in turn affect the daily news report.[2] Much of the popular image of journalists – irascible, irreverent, hard-drinking, competitive – seems traceable to the play and subsequent movie, *The Front Page*, and a number of popular books written by journalists and carrying such titles as *Deadlines & Monkeyshines*[3] and *Drunk Before Noon*,[4] provide ample anecdotes about journalists' personality quirks and amusing stories about newswork.[5] This paper draws from organizational communication theory in positing that the stories told among journalists about their work are more than simply interesting, perhaps funny, yarns. Occupational lore is a powerful constituent in creating and maintaining culture within organizations and occupations.[6] Journalism's folk heroes and antiheroes model behaviors that have been salient to how journalists see their work processes and their very definition of news. The stories have a normative effect, giving new journalists insights and informal training in "the way we do things around here," and reaffirming for all journalists identification with their work community.

Further, the lore may be a barometer of the state of the industry. By monitoring the profession's stories about heroes, villains, and "the way things really are" over time, scholars may better grasp the changing social context and the material realities of the profession. For instance, is it just happenstance that in late 1996 there were stories running through the profession about fights in newspaper newsrooms?[7] Or, had profit pressures and economic straits over the past few years[8] raised the stress levels in newsrooms to a dangerously high level?[9] Does a lack of discernible heroes on American newspapers relate in any way to enrollment fluctuations in the news-editorial sequence at many journalism schools?[10] Or to the quality of potential news-ed students and the applicant pool available to the profession? Apprehending the stories of the workplace may offer insights into important changes in the work force.

Moreover, by examining the worklore of journalists it is possible to draw a better understanding of why the news is what it is. This is terribly important because if journalism's lore either affects or reflects the state of things in the newsroom, it influences the news that is published and broadcast to millions of people daily.

RESEARCH FOCUS

This paper explores the worklore of journalism in the second half of the twentieth century[11] to (a) identify heroes and antiheroes of the craft, (b) analyze the normative qualities of their fame or notoriety, (c) identify a typology of stories told in newsrooms about journalists and their trade, and (d) better understand the dynamics of storytelling and journalism worklore.

Recent studies of daily newspapers across the United States suggest that it is the individual newsroom culture that most influences the perspectives and activities of journalists. These data indicate that the external professional or institutional culture is not the dominant influence on how news is defined and enacted at various newspapers.[12] In discussing news culture, then, it is important to acknowledge the distinctions seen in Weaver and Wilhoit's survey research between the local worker culture and the professional culture beyond the newsroom door. National, regional, and state associations; codes of ethics; and workshops and conferences offer the opportunity for professional or institutional culture formation among journalists. However, Weaver and Wilhoit report that the newsroom, with its "day-to-day interaction with editors and colleagues" is "the most powerful force over their conceptions of values, ethics, and professional practices."[13]

HEROES

Roger Rollin suggests ways of systematically examining types of heroes and myths in American popular culture.[14] His is a typology of types or hierarchical levels of heroes drawn from Northrop Frye that with some adjustment may apply to journalism and organizational settings in general. At the top are the Super Heroes, who are "not only superior, they are different. ... with us but not of us . ... serious characters."[15] In organizational settings, these may correspond to the larger-than-life hero figure who founded the company or is associated with periods of significant growth – a Thomas Watson of IBM, an Al Neuharth of Gannett. Type Two is the Supreme Hero, "only 'superior in degree' to other humans, but so great is that degree of superiority that they function as demi-gods. They are not beyond natural law, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, but they scale tall buildings rather readily."[16] The third type, the Leader-Hero, is above his or her associates but subject to many of the same limitations as the rest of society,[17] while the fourth type, the Everyman-Heroes, "tend to be ordinary mortals thrust by chance or circumstances into extraordinary circumstances. Unlike most mortals, however, they do not back off: they accept the challenge, rise to the occasion, and thereby raise themselves above the legions of the average."[18] Often, there is a comedic quality about an Everyman-Hero that gives him or her human scale.

To initiate this research, the following criteria were used to screen potential "heroes" in the worklore:

1. Must have worked in journalism since 1950.[19]
2. The individual's name is instantly recognizable by working journalists, including those outside large metropolitan daily newspapers and metro broadcast markets.
3. The individual's example, work, or professional activities have normative value for other journalists (i.e., behaviors that instruct other journalists in practices or philosophies of journalism).
4. The combination of name recognition and normative power makes possible linguistic code references readily understood by a majority of journalists without full explanation of that individual's influence on journalism.[20]

These criteria help distinguish between heroes and celebrities, following Rollin's distinction that "although all heroes are celebrities, not all celebrities are heroes."[21] Particularly in the organizational setting, the ability of heroes to provide role models and lessons is what sets them apart, suggesting Rollin's Leader-Hero. In organizations, according to Deal and Kennedy, "Heroes are symbolic figures whose deeds are out of the ordinary, but not too far out. They show – often dramatically – that the ideal of success lies within human capacity."[22]

If the test of heroes is that people look up to them, respect them, learn from them, and attempt to emulate their behaviors, then the surprising fact appears to be that journalism has few heroes, particularly in this half of the twentieth century. For instance, a query put out on three journalism-related listserves – Journet, a journalism educators list; Jhistory, devoted to journalism and mass communication history; and SPJ-L, the list of the Society of Professional Journalists – received less than a dozen nominees for heroes or villains, and villains tended to outnumber heroes.

Just Doing Their Job: Woodward and Bernstein

Arguably the archetypal craft heroes of the second half of the twentieth century are Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the *Washington Post* reporters best known for the Watergate investigation that contributed to the resignation of President Nixon.[23] Their coverage harked back to the muckrakers at the beginning of the century[24] and, with their book, *All the President's Men*,[25] and the movie it spawned, their story "ennobled investigative reporting and made of journalists modern heroes."[26] Historian Michael Schudson has studied the Watergate era at length and writes:

> At its broadest, the myth of journalism in Watergate asserts that two young *Washington Post* reporters brought down the president of the United States. This is a myth of David and Goliath, of powerless individuals overturning an institution of overwhelming might. It is high noon in Washington, with two white-hatted young reporters at one end of the street and the black-hatted president at the other, protected by his minions. And the good guys win. The press, truth its only weapon, saves the day.[27]

Besides giving American journalism what some might contend was its high-water mark in public esteem, at least in the last fifty years, the story of Woodward and Bernstein gave journalists models and lessons in ideology and performance, even decorum, that have had a powerful effect ever since. Schudson refers to the normative value of the Watergate story:

> In their account of their own reporting, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein insisted that they did nothing exceptional. They denied that their manner of reporting was distinctive; to them, "investigative reporting" is just plain reporting. They were, in short, just doing their job. If *All the President's Men* is read as a set of instructions, a handbook for aspiring journalists (and unquestionably it was being read that way), it provides a counsel of caution. Where Woodward and Bernstein took liberties with law or rules of confirming information they received, they apologize. Where they followed rules – like the guideline they established of confirming every important charge with the testimony of at least two informants – they are proud. They make a case for a journalism true to an ideal of objectivity and false to the counterfeit conventions justified in its name.[28]

"The Most Trusted Man In America": Walter Cronkite

Television has created mass audiences in ways newspaper journalism could never do. Thus, it is easier to find heroes in broadcasting and two who seem to meet the criteria are Walter Cronkite and Edward R. Murrow. Here, in particular, one must be careful to distinguish journalism's heroes from its celebrities. The difference between a Peter Jennings and a Walter Cronkite is a function of role-modeling, or what the individual offers in the way of information that can be used by another individual to make a difference. For journalists, Jennings is estimable,[29] but as a network news anchor, just what his example models for the rest of journalism is less certain.[30] Walter Cronkite, on the other hand, enjoyed unprecedented credibility for a journalist, and at least for the foreseeable future his "Uncle Walter" persona is likely to have a powerful effect on broadcast and print journalism. He, too, was a news anchor, but was seen as an active journalist in many of the stories he reported.[31]

In professional terms, Walter Cronkite represents a highly visible embodiment of journalism's supreme value: objectivity. As historian Chester Pach points out, "Walter Cronkite did not earn his reputation as the most trusted man in America by making partisan, gratuitous, or controversial comments about the news, but by reporting it 'the way it was.'"[32] To single out one episode of Cronkite's career risks diminishing his many other exploits, but recent conversations with journalists suggest his 1968 pronouncement on the Vietnam War may have been an archetypal moment for the craft. "To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet satisfactory conclusion," Cronkite told viewers in assessing the Tet offensive. "The only rational way out ... will be to negotiate [and] not as victors."[33] According to Pach, "No other television journalist offered such a full evaluation of Tet."[34] And if public opinion had already begun to turn against continued American involvement in Vietnam,[35] Pach says "Cronkite's declaration that the war was a stalemate had a profound effect on at least one viewer, Lyndon Johnson."[36] As Picard reports, "That broadcast reportedly led Lyndon Johnson to observe, 'Well, if I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America.'"[37]

"See It Now": Edward R Murrow

Edward R. Murrow's legacy may be in the many men and women of broadcasting, such as Mike Wallace and Barbara Walters, who have built careers on hard-hitting, investigative journalism. His heroic status in journalism rests ostensibly on his unflinching toughness in bringing down Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist witch hunts. As historians Jean Folkerts and Dwight Teeter note, "Murrow ... stepped far beyond the featureless objectivity upon which McCarthy had fed. Murrow spoke out at a time when few dared to oppose McCarthy publicly."[38]

Besides standing up for the powerless and afflicted, however, Murrow's mark in the journalism culture may be his vision of journalism's potential, as suggested in the textbooks' many references to his challenges to the industry and to the audience. Radio, Murrow said:

> [I]f it is to serve and survive, must hold a mirror behind the nation and the world. If the reflection shows radical intolerance, economic inequality, bigotry, unemployment or anything else – let the people see it, or rather hear it. The mirror must have no curves and must be held with a steady hand.[39]

He attacked television programming as a mixture of "decadence, escapism, and insulation from the realities of the world,"[40] warning that the medium could "illuminate," "teach," and "inspire" "only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to these ends. Otherwise it is merely lights and wires

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in a box."[41] And he challenged his audiences. "We can deny our heritage and our history but we cannot escape responsibility for the result," he told viewers of his 1954 McCarthy interview. "There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities."[42]

In sum, Woodward and Bernstein, Cronkite, and Murrow achieved hero status in the news culture because they exemplified the highly valued craft norms of truthfulness, dauntless pursuit of the story, standing up to the powerful, and integrity, and credibility with the audiences. Cronkite, and Murrow in particular, also were able to express journalism's highest aims with eloquence backed up by deeds that were in the most valued craft traditions and that in themselves became benchmarks for future performance. It is especially important to note that despite the large organizations that were behind their work, they also were seen as lone individuals in the pursuit of truth, and became role models for journalists everywhere.

VILLAINS

If journalism's worklore has been able to produce few heroes, the going has been only slightly easier for antiheroes and villains among the press corps. Although Deal and Kennedy do not discuss villains or antiheroes in the workplace, such archetypes are identified here as portraying the opposite traits of heroes. They represent journalism's dark side. Just as the heroes are seen to exhibit the best in journalistic behaviors, the villains or antiheroes are noted for their abrogation of important craft norms and values. Rollin says that in popular culture, "Only the attempt on the hero, the doer, guarantees that one will become a famous villain."[43] Here, if we substitute the abstractions truth or trust for the persona of "hero," we have a better understanding of antiheroic qualities in the worklore.

Three journalists who fall into the category are Janet Cooke, R. Foster Winans, and Janet Malcolm. It will be seen that just as dimming worker memories may erode a hero's status, so time – or in one case, doing time – may wash away at least some of the onus if not the sins.

"Plagiarism and Fabrication": Janet Cooke

The Washington Post has the dubious distinction of having employed journalism's greatest heroes and its most egregious villain. Janet Cooke invented a teen-age victim of the drug culture and subsequently lost the Pulitzer Prize in 1981 and her job when the fabrication was discovered.[44] She also admitted to false items on her résumé. A 1996 profile calls her "one of the most infamous figures in journalism. ... Her case has come to symbolize such diverse issues as plagiarism and fabrication, anonymity and unnamed sources, minority recruitment, newsroom ethics, résumé fraud, the precarious practice of New Journalism."[45] For breaking journalism's cardinal rules of truth, she has been "universally vilified from the moment her transgression was revealed."[46] The episode also led "editors around the country" to "move toward cutting down on the use of 'unidentified' sources," and "raised many questions about the Pulitzer awards process."[47]

Making a Buck: R. Foster Winans

A handful of reporters have gone to jail in recent decades for refusing to reveal information about their stories. R. Foster Winans, a columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, served time for revealing too much too soon to too few. In 1987 he was caught in insider trading, tipping stockbroker friends to stories before they appeared in his "Heard on the Street" column.[48] None lamented his departure from journalism and it was widely agreed that his breach of trust and misuse of power gave a black eye for the profession.[49] His example is brought up whenever other financial journalists' ethics are questioned, as in the more recent case of Dan Dorfmann.[50]

"Betrayal": Janet Malcolm

Cooke and Winans were fairly clear-cut examples of dishonesty in newswork. Janet Malcolm, on the other hand, presented the culture with a much more complex issue aptly summed up in a trade journal article headline, "Hold Your Nose and Defend Janet Malcolm."[51] Malcolm's notoriety began when she became embroiled in a long-running libel suit involving charges she fabricated certain quotes in a *New Yorker* magazine series on psychoanalyst Jeffrey Masson.[52] The issue of whether Malcolm had fabricated quotes in the Masson articles, and whether it was legal if she had, ultimately came before the United States Supreme Court. Despite the belief held by many journalists that direct quotes must be verbatim statements of their sources, the

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Supreme Court said, in part, that "writers and reporters by necessity alter what people say, at the very least to eliminate grammatical and syntactical infelicities."[53] The profession's protracted debates over Malcolm's performance and an outcome in her favor that many felt gave journalists "a license to lie"[54] were just part of Malcolm's notoriety within the profession. In March 1989, a two-part *New Yorker* series she wrote[55] attacked the profession, saying a journalist is "a kind of confidence man, preying on people's vanity, ignorance, or loneliness, gaining their trust and betraying them without remorse."[56] Her denunciation of journalists, and Malcolm's own court problems, over time diverted attention from her target in the 1989 articles, journalist Joe McGinnis.[57] The charge touched off a long-running brouhaha in the profession,[58] prompting a *Columbia Journalism Review* article in which twenty prominent journalists were interviewed about Malcolm's claims of editorial seduction and betrayal.[59] The jury of her peers was mixed in its judgment about her criticism of the profession, just as there was debate about whether quotations could be altered so long as the source's intent was preserved. What came out was a sense that at worst, relationships between journalists and sources are subordinate to the obligation journalists have toward serving readers.[60] But while Malcolm has her defenders, her name is associated in many conversations among journalists with abrogating the profession's norms of objectivity and accuracy.

TWICE-TOLD TALES

The normative power of journalism's heroes and villains on practitioners represents an external influence of the professional or institutional culture. As such it is only part of how journalism's mythology shapes the culture. In the newsroom, minor-scale heroes are the characters in stories whose drama and action help create what Deal and Kennedy call "rituals of work life."[61] Story-telling, as Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo report, offers the group information "worthy of emulation (when the story glorifies success) or deserving of caution (when the story accentuates failure)."[62] Stories, then, "are not merely entertaining narratives but are constitutive of organizational passions as they call attention to significant possible future scenarios."[63] On Rollin's typology of heroes, the characters in these tales tend to be Everyman-Heroes, thrust by chance into situations in which by cleverness, luck, or hard work they triumph in some way. Stories collected to date can be roughly placed in several categories, including power and resistance, individualism, keys to success, work rules, coping (often with the help of strong drink), self-image, capricious environment, technology, and "the good old days." As suggested above, further field research is needed to fully develop this typology.

Nostalgia Stories

Running through much of journalism's consciousness is a nostalgia for "the good old days" when, as Carl Sessions Stepp suggests:

> The newspaper man and woman [was] engaged in a holy calling, admired if not loved, feared if not revered, licensed to cross-examine presidents and lounge alongside heartthrobs, intoxicated with the rush of insider access, immune from the indignities of crass commerce. Making a difference. Commanding attention. Mattering.[64]

In recent years there have been several indulgent and sometimes downright longing backward glances at such rough-and-tumble newsrooms as one in Los Angeles of the 1940s, where a female city editor "sometimes used a baseball bat to enforce her will upon reporters in a city room that always seemed to reek of cigar ash, printer's ink, stale whiskey, and cigarette smoke."[65] Former *Harper's* magazine editor Louis Lapham relates that the oldest reporter in the *San Francisco Examiner* newsroom in 1957 had an alphabetized file of stories "(fires; homicides; ship collisions; etc.)" with blank spaces "for the relevant names, deaths, numbers, and street addresses" – "stock versions of maybe fifty or sixty common newspaper texts" from which he drew for vividly written stories prepared with what, to the neophyte, seemed astonishing speed.[66] Often, such traits of newsroom characters – drinking, profanity, gallows humor, and files of stock stories – illustrate mechanisms for coping in a chaotic, unpredictable occupation.

Rules of the Road

In Rochester, New York, where Gannett Co. Inc. owned two newspapers but encouraged a competition between the two news staffs, reporters in the 1980s could be evaluated in part on the basis of the quality of their work and partly on whether they had beaten "the other paper" at the other end of the room.

Although each occupied one half of a block-long room divided by a partition, the news staff of each newspaper was forbidden to encroach on the other's area in the building. Legend in both newsrooms was the story of a *Times-Union* city editor caught using his computer to probe the files of counterparts on the *Democrat and Chronicle* metro desk. The lessons of the story were two: the high sanctions against snooping in such close quarters, but also just how competitive the staff members could be despite single ownership of the newspapers. New staff members were told the story with both lessons in mind.

Erick Newton says Roy Grimm, former *Oakland* (CA) *Tribune* managing editor and before that, city editor, "taught many, many people by telling anecdotes."[67] Of two themes Newton remembers, the "Thank God We Aren't An Afternoon Paper" group refers to time constraints placed on newspapers that make "Kennedy taking off to fly west" difficult as time zones are crossed and the peculiar language of headlines "verbs being written without tense."[68]

Newton also mentions "Just Work Like Hell," a frequent theme in stories told by newsroom supervisors to subordinates and in Oakland spiced with supporting examples such as "the woman who gave birth in the woman's room" and "the guy who died at his desk."[69] At another newsroom, the managing editor's "It's no good if it's not in the paper" became a well-used line to squelch bull sessions and get everyone back to work.

Unpredictability

The capriciousness of editors and other internal power wielders is a theme resonant among reporters, and much lore features supervisors bested in the end by their newsroom minions. Lisa Friedman of *The Bakersfield Californian* cites a tale told on the Internet about a *New York Times* reporter, "one of the best reporters on the staff" who "during the McCarthy era ... was 'punished' for his views and dumped on the obit desk. Maybe they thought he would quit. Instead, he turned death writing into an art form, turning out truly inspiring obituaries."[70] The value of such stories was demonstrated when Friedman relayed it to "a friend at another paper who was demoted from covering the county to night cops! I think it shows a real newspaperman's can-do grit."[71]

Editing: Terror in Time and Space

Deadlines, details, and space converge in nightmares reported by some journalists during their early days learning page layout. "The Seven-Column Blues,"[72] a brief cautionary ballad of chaos wrought in all departments of the newspaper because "ya dummied seven columns on a six-column page!"[73] underscores for newcomer and veteran alike the interdependence of newspaper functions, highlights job pressure, and restates the consequences of poor performance.

Nightmares involving page layout are sometimes reported by neophyte layout editors. A possibly extreme case reported by the author illustrates the tension: On the first week of laying out the local section of a daily, the author each night had a different nightmare on a single theme. One night the end of the world was occurring. As stars exploded on a bleak, moonlike landscape, the editor was in a concrete bunker feverishly trying to finish his page layouts and get the paper out. Another night, the editor, a recently returned Vietnam War veteran, dreamt of being with a patrol on an ambush in the jungle. As other members of the patrol engaged in a fierce firefight, the editor desperately tried to get his pages done. And so it continued for five nights. After his weekend off, the editor's nightmares went away, but they were recounted to successive generations of layout editors to illustrate (1) that job-related sleep disruptions are not uncommon but (2) they do go away in time. The story also conveys underlying themes that the job requires singleness of purpose and the ability to ignore everything else around you.

Skills

The risk of too much creativity, especially in large type, is subject of many stories told in newsrooms. Bill Huntzicker, a former reporter, recalls that "when I started at the Associated Press in Minneapolis in 1967, we were told about the headline that read 'Fertile woman killed near Climax,' which supposedly appeared in a Minnesota paper."[74] "Fertile and Climax are both small Minnesota towns, or so I was told," he says. "I was told the story in my orientation as a warning about unknowingly creating puns."[75]

Many of the stories told in newsrooms relate to skills, frequently with cautionary twists. Headline stories, such as the one above, warn of pitfalls for the unwary copy editor, and there are instructive and scary interview stories (e.g., name mix-ups, lost notes) and photography stories (often trickster tales of clever manipulation to get the photo) in every newsroom as well.

Power and Resistance

In the genre of newsroom stories involving bosses and staff, there exists a subgenre of "exit" stories. At one newspaper, a departing staff member is reputed to have walked into the managing editor's office and, in the words of the Country-Western song, proclaimed, "You can take this job and shove it." At the *Chicago Daily News*, according to Christopher Harper:

> A copy editor was fired but had to work his last day. At lunch, he bought a fish. He cut the fish in two and wrapped the back end in paper and wrote HTK (head to come) and sent it though the pneumatic tube. He then sent the head a short while later before leaving the building.[76]

Trickster stories, often relating to pay and promotion, show up in the newsroom lore as well. Desley Bartlett, an Australian journalist, tells of working for a "born-again Christian" who "enforced an in-house rule of taking a Christian view of the news and promoting family values."[77] He adds:

> At the same time career advancement was stalled, for all sorts of reasons – mostly economic, according to the management. Low-ranking journos, in particular cadets, were always asking how to get promoted. The story goes that one innovative cadet wrote the boss a memo and said God had come to her in a dream and told her to ask for a promotion. The reply – "Ask and ye shall receive, I have today authorised your promotion." I don't know how true it is but I do know the cadet WAS promoted.[78]

Creativity in pursuit of cash in Chicago is related by Ralph Otwell, who tells of the expense statement filed by Ray Brennan, the "fabled reporter ... who exemplified all the traits immortalized in the *Front Page*."[79] Upon returning from a military junket to the DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line, Brennan, handed in an expense statement "punctuated with entries reading, 'Taxicabs,' and dollar amounts. Adds Otwell:

> The executive editor, Milburn P. Akers – a former political editor who knew all the common tricks of cheat-sheeting – bounced it back to Brennan with a notion, "Cabs at the Arctic Circle?" Quietly, and with studied precision, Brennan revised the expense account. For every mention of "Taxicab" he inserted "Dog Sled" and sent the form back to Akers. Akers, knowing when he had been bested by a creative reporter, initialed the expense account and sent it along to the cashier for reimbursement.[80]

Technology

Until recent years, technology in the newspaper newsroom has been slow to change, and one encounters in virtually every newsroom the story of the old-timer who refused to learn how to operate a computer terminal.[81] In some places, the old-timer went into retirement still holding out for his manual typewriter. Some newspapers even sent the typewriter he used off with him. Typewriters in particular seem to give rise to a variant of the John Henry saga, even if instead of a steel-driving man the image is of a Royal-driving man.[82]

It has been suggested, too, that technology has become the new scapegoat in the workplace, and journalists frequently lament the constraints brought by computerization of newswork.

Youth and Age

In many newsrooms there is a continual tug over youth and vigor vs. age and experience. Whether because of low pay or love of the job or both, many journalists work well beyond normal retirement age, and some become subjects of stories that reify the "old warhorse" ethic. In day-to-day shoptalk in the newsroom, veterans often snicker at mistakes made by inexperienced, often young reporters. An item in a recent trade publication affirming the wisdom and experience of longtime staffers began, "Latch on to the old geezers and sop up all you can from them."[83]

At the same time, there is always a sense that journalism is for the young and vigorous. A song written by a staffer on the *Irish Times* of Dublin focuses on the sad end of an old journalist in a newsroom inhabited by "sharp, keen young men about town."[84]

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The archetypal heroes and villains identified here provide one set of clues about journalism's professional culture. The stories are another piece of the puzzle. Because this is the beginning of an exploration and the research is preliminary, it is premature, if not presumptuous, to talk of "findings." Instead, the results may be seen in terms of hypotheses emerging from the material and more questions to be answered. The hypotheses include:

1. Heroes and folk tales are complementary rather than interchangeable influences on the work culture of

journalists. Heroes and villains tend to be associated with core values and emerge from the center of the craft, while stories as worklore tend to embrace a wider range of behaviors and concerns. The heroic figures seem to be associated with how the profession views its relationship with external audiences, while the work tales often focus on how journalists get along as colleagues and co-workers, or the nitty-gritty of the job.

2. Heroes and villains or antiheroes are not the same as the characters in journalism's folk stories. Rollin's typology for popular culture heroes helps explain there are degrees of hero and villain, and the external, professional craft hero is at a higher plane than the characters who enliven newsroom stories. Often the former are more serious and correspond to the Supreme Hero or Leader-Hero, while the local characters are portrayed in more playful terms and reflect the Everyman-Hero.
3. It is arguable that a high degree of conservatism, the restoration of craft order, is at work when a professional or external culture selects its heroes and villains. Individuals become a professional culture's heroes not for being at extremes but because they exemplify the culture's core values and beliefs. Woodward and Bernstein were embraced by the profession for their celebrity among the public and celebrated for using so well the widely accepted craft practices they themselves insisted were just good journalism.[85] Similarly, the antiheroes' relation to those

core values is what energizes the worker culture to treat them as villains. Antiheroes, too, may exert a powerful normative influence on practitioners. The stories of their transgressions reify the craft norms and journalists' self-image by reinforcing the penalties for abrogating journalism's written and, more often, unwritten rules. Janet Cooke and Janet Malcolm were excoriated by the profession for abusing its tools and the public trust, thereby risking bringing the profession into ill repute.

4. Stories emerge from the flashpoints, the nexus of the journalists with newsmakers or audiences, or the points of interaction among subgroups within the craft, such as reporters and editors, copy editors and reporters, editors and page designers, young and old, the junction of different work technologies.

An Absence of Heroes

The relative absence of heroes in the recent lore of journalism is grounds for further research, and possibly concern. It may be that a reason for the lack of heroes is the nature of journalism itself, its dedication to full disclosure and unsentimental detail. According to Rollin:

> There is a high correlation between the potentiality of a hero-figure for serving the psychological needs of hero-worshippers and the vagueness of the hero's image. Archetypes and stereotypes are functional *because* they are one-dimensional – "cool" in McLuhanese. They allow audiences to fill in the blanks on their own, to recreate the hero best suited to their individual fantasies. The hero who can be both seen and heard, in living color (or colorlessness), can thus be at a disadvantage. An individuals' very uniqueness serves as

> a bar towards the evocation of archetypal and stereotypical responses."[86]

Rollin also notes that in popular culture, "the hold on the popular imagination of real-life popular culture heroes is usually brief. They too are subject to the merciless scannings of the mass media and often they do not hold up."[87] Given a work culture that sees its mission partly as debunking myths and heroes in public life, there is little wonder that the culture celebrates so few heroes in its own ranks. Irreverence of the early part of the century is held by some to have given way to cynicism in the latter half,[88] leaving the profession at a loss for hero figures to follow.

Women, Minorities

The research to date suggests another conclusion that merits further study, namely that in journalism's heroes, antiheroes, and worklore there is a strong element of sexism. For instance, a feminist critique might suggest that those women who are featured in the worklore either are favored for the masculine qualities (e.g., the bat-wielding female city editor), or devalued as incompetent.[89] Moreover, if there are few heroes in twentieth-century journalism, particularly the second half, none of them seem to be women, although there are many notable female journalists. Among journalism's antiheroes, the results are mixed but it might be argued that of the examples discussed in this analysis, Cooke and Malcolm have greater name recognition among journalists than any of the male villains who have been nominated.[90] If the work culture is the repository of news frames, the absence of female heroes in even a very small pantheon may suggest larger problems in news presentation.

Sea-Change for the News Culture

Organizational changes in the industry and the growing "corporatization" of the media[91] are bringing new forms, such as implementation of work teams and quality circles,[92] or so-called citizen-based reporting,[93] for which the craft lore and traditions have little relevance and may, in fact, be seen as obstructions. Indeed, an exploratory examination of the literature suggests much of the lore of journalists sets the stage for a confrontation with today's powerful market forces and trends. Running through many stories about journalists, from the mundane shop talk of a reporter talking about her latest story to celebrations of singular reportorial feats,[94] is the image of the "lone gun"[95] taking on society's evils and failings, and those responsible for corruption and incompetence. There seem no approving tales about newsroom committees.

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Endnotes

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[1] One of the notable exceptions is the insightful, if somewhat dated, work of sociologist Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

[2] Gans talks about the role of journalists in story-telling and mythmaking for the public (p. 294), but little direct attention is given to the stories and myths that sustain the news culture. Other sociologists producing notable work in this area include Gaye Tuchman, for example *Making News: A Study of the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978). As Becker, Fruit and Caudill say, "While the literature on the training and backgrounds of journalists is not extensive, there is a massive literature looking at journalistic values, particularly those associated with the concept of professionalism." Lee B. Becker, Jeffrey W. Fruit, and Susan L. Caudill, *The Training and Hiring of Journalists* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1987), 18. Much of the journalist socialization literature begins with Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," *Social Forces* 33 (1955).

[3] John J. McPhaul, *Deadlines & Monkeyshines: The Fabled World of Chicago Journalism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962).

[4] Ken Hoyt and Frances Spatz Leighton, *Drunk Before Noon: The Behind-the-Scenes Story of the Washington Press Corps* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979).

[5] Fred Fedler, among other media historians, has pointed out that the portrayal of journalists "as scoundrels: as prying, rude, ruthless, adversarial, arrogant, and unethical. ... (and) as heavy drinkers, even drunkards" began in the nineteenth century. Fred Fedler, "From 1850 to 1950: Assessing the Historical Stereotype of Journalists as Heavy Drinkers." Paper presented to the History Division of the Southeast Colloquium of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, Fla., 9-11 March 1995.

[6] See, for instance, Terrence E. Deal and Allan A. Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1982).

[7] Jeremy Bagott, "Copy Desk Diplomacy 101," *Editor & Publisher*, 9 November 1996: 56.

[8] See, for instance, John H. McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994); Douglas Underwood, *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

[9] There is a small but growing literature of stress in newswork. Cook and Banks identify burnout in the newsroom, particularly among copy editors. Betsy B. Cook and Steven R. Banks, "Predictors of Job Burnout in Reporters and Copy Editors," *Journalism Quarterly* 70 (Spring 1993).

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Research led by Giles in the early 1980s identified stress among newspaper editors. Robert H. Giles, *Newsroom Management: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (Detroit: Media Management Books, 1991). In their surveys of journalists, Weaver and Wilhoit found rising job dissatisfaction. David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996).

[10] For 1995, Ohio State University's Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Enrollments reported, undergraduate enrollment in journalism and mass communication programs remained unchanged from 1994. Dorothy Giobbe, "J-program Enrollment Flat," *Editor & Publisher*, 7 December 1996, 4-5.

[11] The rationale here is that it is the most-recent history of journalism and its practitioners that is most salient in the profession today.

[12] Weaver and Wilhoit, 169.

[13] Ibid., 171. In a more limited study involving ethics, "day-by-day newsroom learning" was the decidedly more influential than the nearest other influence, "family upbringing," leading Lambeth to say, "Clearly, to be effective, ethical dialogue must include the members of the newsroom and take account of the newsroom's day-by-day encounters with issues of principle and value." Edmund B. Lambeth, *Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession*, 2d. ed., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 181.

[14] Roger R. Rollin, "The Lone Ranger and Lenny Skutnik: The Hero as Popular Culture," in Ray B. Browne and Marshall W. Fishwick, ed. *The Hero In Transition* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1983), 14-45.

[15] Rollin, 27.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 28.

[18] Ibid., 29.

[19] The rationale here is twofold. First, there is evidence in the literature and anecdotally that even heroes have "lifetimes," after which their influence wanes. Second, this research seeks to capture processes that are current and ongoing, hence the focus on the last half-century of journalism.

[20] This criterion, which borrows from Bormann's fantasy theme analysis, relates to the creation of codes and cryptic references that are clues to the existence of fantasy types that help members of groups gain and maintain cohesion and sensemaking ability. Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Ten Years Later," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (August 1982).

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[21] Rollin, 15.

[22] Deal and Kennedy, 37.

[23] It should be noted that Woodward has lost considerable luster since the early 1970s as his subsequent reporting methods have been questioned and as he moved into the managerial ranks of *The Washington Post*, see, for instance, Bill Kovach, "A Summer of Corrosion," *Editor & Publisher*, 26 October, 1996, 48. Bernstein, on the other hand, moved out of the news spotlight and retains much of his prestige among journalists. The effect of their book, and more so, the movie, may have helped freeze their Watergate work in a moment in time and insulated Woodward's Watergate identity from his later persona.

[24] Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 164.

[25] Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, *All the President's Men* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

[26] Michael Schudson, *Watergate in American Memory* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992),104.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: BasicBooks, 1978), 188.

[29] For example, he was voted "best evening news anchor" in *Washington Journalism Review's* eighth annual poll, although no particular reasons for the outcome were indicated. Judy Flander, "The Winners," *Washington Journalism Review*, March 1992, 43.

[30] Michael Massing, "Is the Most Popular Evening Newscast the Best?" *Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April 1991.

[31] Robert G. Picard, "Journalist As Hero: The Adulation of Walter Cronkite," in *The Hero In Transition*, ed. Ray B. Browne and Marshall W. Fishwick (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1983), 199.

[32] Chester J. Pach, Jr. "And That's the Way It Was: The Vietnam War on the Network Nightly News," in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, ed. David Farber (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 97.

[33] Picard, 199.

[34] Pach, 110.

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[35] A number of analysts have suggested that a sizable proportion of public opinion had turned against the war as early as mid-1967. See, for instance, Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie* (New York: Random House, 1988).

[36] Pach, 112.

[37] Picard, 199.

[38] Jean Folkerts and Dwight L. Teeter, Jr., *Voices of a Nation: A History of Mass Media in the United States* (New York: Macmillan College Publishing Co., 1994), 453.

[39] Quoted in Folkerts and Teeter, 439.

[40] Ibid., 443.

[41] Ibid., 410.

[42] Ibid., 453.

[43] Rollin, 23.

[44] David A. Maraniss, "Post Reporter's Pulitzer Prize Is Withdrawn," *The Washington Post*, 16 April 1981, A1.

[45] Mike Sager, "Janet's World," *GQ* June 1966, p. 203.

[46] Ibid.

[47] John Consoli, "1981 Was a Controversial Year for Daily Newspapers," *Editor & Publisher*, 2 January, 1982, p. 8.

[48] Kara Newman, "Walking a Tightrope," *American Journalism Review*, October 1996, 36.

[49] Lambeth, *Committed Journalism*.

[50] Newman, 36.

[51] "Hold Your Nose and Defend Janet Malcolm," *Quill*, January/February 1991, p. 8.

[52] Janet Malcolm, "Annals of Scholarship: Trouble in the Archives," *New Yorker*, 5 December 1983, 12 December, 1983.

[53] Quoted in Andi Stein, "Taking Note of the Law: A Study of the Legal and Ethical Issues in Cases Involving Reporters' Interview Notes," Paper presented to the Law Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual convention, Anaheim, CA, 10-13 August, 1996.

[54] Ibid.

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[55] Janet Malcolm, "Reflections: The Journalist and The Murderer," *New Yorker*, 13 March, 20 March 1989.

[56] Quoted in Marvin Gottlieb, "Dangerous Liaisons: Journalists and Their Sources," *Columbia Journalism Review*, July/August 1989, 21.

[57] Lambeth, 90.

[58] Michael Hoyt, "Malcolm., Masson, and You." *Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April 1991.

[59] Gottlieb, 21.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Deal and Kennedy, 60.

[62] Michael E. Pacanowsky and Nick O'Donnell-Trujillo, "Organizational Communication as Cultural Performance," *Communication Monographs* 50 (1983), 139.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Carl Sessions Stepp, "The Thrill Is Gone," *American Journalism Review* October 1995, 15.

[65] Bill Walker, "Back When It Was Fun," *Quill* September 1996, 22.

[66] Louis H. Lapham, "Gilding the News," *Harper's* July 1981, 34.

[67] Erick Newton, personal correspondence, 5 November 1996.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Lisa Friedman, personal correspondence, 5 November 1996.

[71] Ibid.

[72] "The Seven-Column Blues," *BONG Bull* No. 268, 13-14 April, 1994, 1. *BONG Bull*, a periodic electronic publication edited by Charley Stough of the *Dayton* (Ohio) *Daily News*, is one of the few sources for journalism's minor folk tales and worklore themes. Its perspective tends to be that of copy editors rather than reporters and photographers, however.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Bill Huntzicker, personal correspondence, 5 November 1996.

[75] Ibid.

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[76] Christopher Harper, personal correspondence, 6 November 1996.

[77] Desley Bartlett, personal correspondence, 10 November 1996.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ralph Otwell, personal correspondence, 11 November 1996.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Resistance to computers appears to be in the tradition of nineteenth-century journalists who resisted arrival of the typewriter and the telephone in the newsroom. See, for instance, Fred Fedler, "Early Innovations: Their Impact on Newsrooms," Paper presented to the History Division of the Southeast Colloquium of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Knoxville, Tenn., 14-15 March 1997.

[82] "I want to believe better prose was produced at typewriters," says one former journalist. "It also seemed to me that the louder you hammered, the more active the verb." Allan Wolper, "Recalling the Days of the Typewriter," *Editor & Publisher*, 30 November 1996, p. 40. For contrary views from the last century, see Fedler, "Early Innovations."

[83] Terry M. Clark, "Find a Geezer and Start Learning," *Editor & Publisher*, 23 November 1996, p. 40.

[84] Mickey McConnell, "Boys of the Byline Brigade." Collected by folk musician and former journalist Robert Stepnoe. Personal communication.

[85] Schudson, *Discovering*, 188.

[86] Rollin, 22.

[87] Rollin, 24-25.

[88] See, for instance, Paul Starobin, "A Generation of Vipers: Journalists and the New Cynicism," *Columbia Journalism Review* March/April 1995.

[89] For example, the "culprit" in the lyric of "The Seven-Column Blues," is female.

[90] For instance, in his discussion of Janet Cooke, Lambeth (3) mentions the case of *New York Daily News* columnist Michael Daly, who resigned when it was learned he had made up the identity of a British soldier alleged to have shot a boy in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Although the Daly case gained notoriety at the time, (see, for instance, Consoli, 8), Cooke remains far better known for her fabrication.

[91] See, for instance, McManus, Underwood.

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[92] See, for instance, Nancy Davis, "Testing Teamwork," *Presstime* February 1994, 24-27; Scott Johnson, "Newsroom Circles: The State Rearranges Its Newsroom - and News Coverage," *Quill* March 1993, 28-30

[93] Davis Merritt, *Public Journalism and the Public Life: Why Telling the News Is Not Enough*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1995.

[94] Such as the Watergate coverage.

[95] See, for instance, Jim Sachetti, "Journalists Are Loners," *ASNE Bulletin* April 1995, 20-21; Philip Meyer, "Moral Confusion: The What, Why, and How of Journalism Is Changing," *Quill* November/December 1994, 31-33.

American Myth, Literary Journalism and *The Last Cowboy*'s Henry Blanton

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One of the characteristics and strengths of literary journalism[1] lies in this form's tendency to challenge a society's common myths, forcing readers to reconsider them, perhaps even reconstitute them. Works of literary journalism that force readers to consider myth include Joan Didion's *Salvador*, John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, Lillian Ross' portrait of Ernest Hemingway, and Adrian Nicole Leblanc's "Trina and Trina." To demonstrate literary journalism's propensity to accomplish such cultural critiques, this paper uses literary theory to focus on one work, Jane Kramer's *The Last Cowboy*. Originally published as two parts in the "Profile" series in the *New Yorker*[2], Kramer's work is more than a mere biography or a piece of conventional journalism: it is an artful reconstruction of fact. Thomas Connery defines the literary journalism as "nonfiction printed prose whose verifiable content is shaped and transformed into a story or sketch by use of narrative and rhetorical techniques generally associated with fiction. The themes that then emerge," he continues, "make a statement, or provide an interpretation, about the people and culture depicted" (xiv). It is this interpretative quality of literary journalism that makes both a literary and cultural analysis of it appropriate. This interpretive nature of literary journalism, as opposed to conventional journalism, invites critical response.

In *The Last Cowboy*, Jane Kramer looks carefully and insightfully at the life of Henry Blanton, a genuine Texas cowboy at his fortieth birthday. Her story centers on Henry and his wife Betsy, as they attempt to live the American cowboy dream in the Texas Panhandle[3]. All his life, Henry has pined for the West of the movies: the black clothing of the Virginian, the code of the handshake, life on the chuck wagon, and the quintessential showdown. Kramer gives Henry his showdown in *The Last Cowboy*, and he loses. Although, as will be explained later, Betsy's role in the book is smaller than Henry's, her growing isolation and sadness are juxtaposed to his insistence on adhering to the old codes of the West and his optimism that those codes will work in his everyday life. This essay explores the commentary on the myth of the American West that emerges from this piece of literary journalism, specifically through Kramer's use of landscape and language. Ultimately, *The Last Cowboy* leads us to cultural realizations highly relevant in contemporary America. To unearth that contemporary connection, this paper traces the myth of the American West back to its roots in the early American psyche, allowing this context to appropriately frame Henry's attachment to Westerns. Examining American mythology's roots in the pastoral fantasy of the first colonists hints at why Henry loses the showdown and finds himself so disappointed when his fortieth birthday rolls around; Betsy's role in the myth reveals pertinent gender tensions. In revisiting the cowboy myth and its formation, it is possible to isolate the changes in that myth that Kramer shows, and to explore the myth's contemporary ramifications.

Kramer foregrounds a record of how the myth actualized in the lives of Henry and Betsy, highlighting how out-of-sync Henry's imaginative world is with the real world in which he is trying to survive. While who won the conflicts over physical territory in the West is fairly clear, who is winning the ongoing cultural territory is still unclear; and American perceptions of myth lie at the center of the battle. Contemporary America seems generally to understand and widely recognize that Native Americans were treated unconscionably by settlers, and that women's needs and aspirations were secondary to the "westering" impulse which produced cowboys. In fact, James Maguire notes that during the last thirty-five years, most writers of Westerns have "articulated in their art the conviction that we must stop exploiting not only other human beings but also the natural world that sustains all life" (437). Yet in *The Last Cowboy*, the myths which drove people West and which resulted from its settling are still obviously at work. Cultural and literary critics alike have noted the presence of the myth of the West in American literature and its significance. The myth of the West includes, of course, the idea of America as an open land full of unlimited and ever-expanding opportunities for individuals strong enough to forge success. Richard Slotkin writes that myths give coherence and direction to societies (*Regeneration* 3) but continues that "a people unaware of its myths is likely to continue living by them," (4) even if the ideas are destructive. "Myths reach out from the past," he writes, "to cripple, incapacitate, or strike down the living" (5). This look at *The Last Cowboy* focuses on that uncertain cultural territory of American myth.

In exploring that territory, Kramer gives Henry's world dramatic form by presenting the events of the book, as mentioned, as a Western showdown. She does this structurally by alternating chapters between Henry's daily existence and aspects of his past that threaten him. They come together as the narrative progresses, a scene of Henry's present and then a scene which threatens Henry's lifestyle (a glimpse of general history or of Henry's past), much like alternating scenes in Westerns often show the conflicting parties riding furiously on their horses to the meeting place. Readers gain a clearer view of Henry's rejection of his past as an imminent confrontation draws closer. Ironically, within the larger scheme of Kramer's structural showdown are Henry's continued refusals to actually confront what threatens his well-being and his attempts to manufacture meaningless showdowns to satisfy his pride. To craft Henry's showdown, Kramer builds suspense and meaning by developing Henry and Betsy as characters and revealing their relationship to the myth. The track she follows in doing so recounts their life together:

Chapter One: Henry's current situation, especially his unsettled state of mind,
Two: a history of the cowboy and the myth surrounding the reality,
Three: a description of their current location, Willow Ranch, and its background,
Four: Henry's birthday adventure with Tom, including a manufactured showdown, a fight they pick with two strangers daring to wear cowboy hats,
Five: a history of cattle country and Henry's grandfather,
Six: Henry's and several colleagues' discussion of the life, woes, and virtues of the modern cowboy,
Seven: a history of the Panhandle and the economics of the cattle business,
Eight: Henry's mini-showdown with George and Emily, who confront him with his distorted version of the past,
Nine: personal background, including Henry's educational history that left him sour on the world outside ranching and led him to "tak[e] his instruction from the movies" (97),
Ten: Henry's sheer optimism stemming from his impending deal,
Eleven: the desolate life Betsy has led,

Twelve: and finally the narrative's culmination in Henry's final failure to effect change and express himself "right" as he castrates his neighbor's bulls.

Thus, tension in the chapters builds as Kramer alternates truth against Henry's interpretation of it.

After recounting certain gains Henry's family has made, beginning with his grandfather, such as a pragmatism born of hard work, religious conviction, and the possibility of material prosperity, Kramer then revisits the losses, the greatest of which is the loss of land and cattle through failed negotiations. She shows the greatest effect of these losses through Betsy. The contrast between Henry and Betsy forms the most poignant manifestation of the book's core tension, Henry's obsession with the myth; for Henry remains self-centeredly optimistic that the code of the handshake will come through for him, and Betsy sacrifices herself, denying her own happiness. Kramer's attention to character development and the book's structure intertwine. She links her chapters together through character development and attention to myth in Henry's life. The art of her tale is driven by uncovering what has caused Henry's inability to achieve success. Through these disparate episodes we see that Henry's tragic flaw is his need to cling to these defunct images and codes. This development provides much of the unity between chapters.

Every episode in *The Last Cowboy* develops this characterization. Through her alternating chapters, Henry as a character emerges, and Kramer reveals that his true showdown is the search for his identity: the search is a showdown because it is not a journey, it is a fight. A "cowboy in trouble" may have generally been "spared the humiliation and confusion of accounting for himself" (Kramer 26), but that lifestyle has robbed him of a clear identity. As he sits silently in the Robinson kitchen on his birthday, having picked a fight with strangers in town and "looking as if he had done his duty to his brother and did not know why, suddenly, his duty seemed so humiliating to him" (30). Henry distrusts his grandfather's and father's experience, and even his own experience, living in such a pastoral fantasy that he actively fights reality. His struggle with reality informs much of the book's tragic nature; he is the incarnation of misapplied, misunderstood myth. Henry's final showdown with the bulls only accentuates his fruitless struggle.

Henry's struggle with reality surprised Kramer, as it surprises many readers. She writes in her book's preface that she expected to find someone "less troubling" when she traveled to Texas in search of a cowboy. She returned to her own world with " a kind of parable of failed promise" that taught her more about America than she "had ever hoped or wanted to discover" (ix). Yet her account is distinctly touching; she does not overlook Henry's courtesy or his pain. The ambiguity and irony in Kramer's work are evident in its very title. For the American reader imbued with the cultural myth of the brave cowboy riding his way to happiness, "the last cowboy" perhaps indicates a final vestige of real men and a purer America. Indeed we still hear echoes of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier claim: that settling the West enabled Americans to shun European ways and transformed them to set about the crucial, democratic task of settling the continent. For such readers, Henry's failures no doubt seem aberrations. In this light, instead of resonating with irony, Henry Blanton's last act of castration affirms his masculinity and hope for a new beginning.

Read this way, though, as a simple culturally-relevant biography, Kramer's book loses much of its irony and richness. *The Last Cowboy* has been understood in various ways: an account of the difficult economy of ranching, a biography including varied tangents[4], and as "part of a larger project of intercultural interpretation[5]." Part of the power of Kramer's book lies in the possibility of these multiple readings. But if we place the book in its cultural context and examine its codes carefully, we can uncover a specific, relevant message that situates it at the center of an important moment for myth and literature in America. In one sense, the "cowboy" clearly is Kramer's focus, but other significant cultural allusions permeate the book. In their cultural context, past and present, cowboys enact conquest upon the land and people of the West; today the cowboy images, codified as a throwback to a more innocent time, perpetuate that conquest-oriented attitude. In this context, Henry's incessant optimism is undercut by impending disaster; and through showing Betsy's increasing, profound sense of loss and grief, Kramer critiques that myth-in-action. For a complete understanding of *The Last Cowboy*, Henry's struggle with reality must be contextualized. Though Kramer's findings may be unconscious, the particular ways in which Henry's story indicts the myth of the West are salient for any discussion of her book.

The dichotomy between Henry's optimism and his failures that permeates *The Last Cowboy* inhabits the very landscape surrounding Henry and fills the book. Jane Tompkins explains the importance of landscape in Westerns and writes that the land is "defined by absence: of trees, of greenery, of houses, of the signs of civilization, above all, absence of water and shade[6]." She writes that the land challenges those who inhabit it to be as brave and strong as it is (71). Kramer seems to sense this relationship between people and land and focuses directly on the landscape of the Panhandle ranch where the Blantons live, ascribing importance to the idea of place.

Henry's passion to succeed on the land and in fact own land of his own again places him in the middle of the idea of American dream. Patricia Nelson Limerick writes in *The Legacy of Conquest* that "neither the Western past nor the Western present will make sense until attachment to property and attraction to profit find their proper category as a variety of strong emotion" (76). And Annette Kolodny has written that to fully understand the literature of the frontier, we must "see the ways in which the collision of languages encodes the physical terrain as just as much a player in the drama as the humans, with the landscape variously enabling, thwarting, or even evoking human action and desires ("Letting Go" 3). This concern for the land in literature is enlightening, for the landscape is symbolic; Kolodny focuses on the need to understand the unacknowledged fantasies that drive us either to desecrate or preserve the land (*Land Before* xii).

Elements of Henry's approach to myth and reality can be found in the early American perception of land and its use. Kolodny effectively demonstrates that when colonists came to the New World,

> all the backdrops for European literary pastoral were subsumed in the image of an America promising material ease without labor or hardship . . . and all this possible because, at the deepest psychological level, the move to America was experienced as the daily reality of what has become its single dominating metaphor: regression from the cares of adult life and a return to the primal warmth of womb or breast in a feminine landscape. (*Lay* 6)

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Americans actually interpreted their metaphors as literal truth. "American pastoral," Kolodny writes, "holds at its very core the promise of fantasy as daily reality" (7). Colonists saw the land as both attractive and vulnerable (3). This "pastoral impulse" to view the land as feminine creates a disconcerting tension: viewing the land as both virginal and maternal (22). The very core of American mythology is that the symbolic and daily activities are joined in this odd, mixed metaphor. *The Last Cowboy* is a prime example of the metaphor which Kolodny isolates still in action. We may no longer consciously think about land in feminine terms, but clearly many still experience land in this way, living as if a frontier lay before them awaiting their arrival.

Certainly this is the center of Henry's problem: he has confused the myth with a reality he can act out every day. Kramer's construction of him in this light is deliberate; her story is fact, but she chooses carefully what she includes, and she consciously shapes the narrative as a distortion of myth. She creates a Henry Blanton who is trapped in a present in which he cannot cope because he references his life in terms of myth. He exists apart from *The Last Cowboy*, but within those pages, Kramer portrays him against the backdrop of the landscape of American mythology. The initial colonial tension is easily seen in Henry: he wants to be one with a pristine land (e.g. sleeping under the stars), but he fights to subdue it (e.g. irrigation, electric fences).

This tradition of which Henry is a part is long and illustrious. Philip Freneau's poetry and Thomas Jefferson's agrarian ideal are both firmly based on the pastoral impulse (*Lay* 26). Kolodny pinpoints the oscillation between enthusiasm and disillusion which stems from this conflict (44); Henry experiences such shifts throughout the narrative, especially highlighted in chapters ten--sheer optimism--and twelve--utter despair. Language plays an important role in trying to maintain both aspects of the land metaphor. Michel-Guillaume St. Jean de Crevecoeur attempted to forge a vocabulary which would hospitably house the varying tensions, but his work as a whole simply exposes them (65). John James Audubon, too, grappled with the conflict but found himself unable to resolve his concern and called upon Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and others like them to reconcile the ideas (88), much as Henry counts on his big screen cowboys, John Wayne, Glen Ford, and others, to do the "expressin' right" for him. It is significant that Audubon

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looked to fiction to work out the messy details of the conflict, realizing that the ideas could not coalesce realistically. Fiction began to historicize and actually shape the myth; pieces of literary journalism like Kramer's, then, work nicely against that tradition. As a literary journalist, Kramer can expose the reality artfully.

Kolodny writes that women of the frontier developed their own metaphor for relating to the land, and she presents their version as a more desirable alternative: "If the men altered the landscape to make it comply with their dreams of pleasure . . . the women patched quilts and embroidered . . . and cultivated a nearby garden plot . . ." ("Honing" 201) Women, she writes, "required the intercession of a meaningful relational paradigm in and through which [they] might be usefully and comfortably located on [the] terrain . . . for women, massive physical alteration was a fantasy projection honed not by force but by the transforming power of language: a languagescape" (200). "If men persisted in discovering--and then despoiling--Paradise, the women (it appears) all along knew the garden needed tending," she adds (194). This information is useful in examining our frontier history and our current views of land; it also provides a helpful tool in understanding Betsy's relation to myth in *The Last Cowboy*.

But Kolodny's implication that the female metaphor is acceptable is problematic. This is a dangerous supposition for Kolodny to make, that the land *needed* tending. The truth is that neither the male nor the female metaphor is entirely acceptable. They both contribute to the futility of the myth; they both imply conquest. An important aspect of these metaphors Kolodny seems to miss is the displacement of American Indians necessary to enact either metaphor and the changes in the land either requires. Approval of a garden metaphor seems premature, given even its imposition on the land. She writes that "to survive, women needed to readjust and recast alternative relational paradigms" to "assert their right to a languagescape of their own" ("Honing" 202), neglecting the right of Native Americans to enact their languagescape.

Encoding this within the myth/metaphor hints at Mary Louise Pratt's work on ideas of conquest. She reveals that "European bourgeois subjects [sought] to secure their innocence at the same moment as they assert[ed] European hegemony" and terms this process the "anti-conquest"

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(7). Anti-conquest notions are all throughout *The Last Cowboy*, and Kramer alerts her readers to the oppression inherent in the activities throughout the course of the book. By coding their action as positive (asserting that the land *needed* tending), innocence is maintained. This is evident in Henry's treatment of Betsy; he tells her, when discussing various times he has left her alone in the country, "I was protecting your interests, Betsy" (Kramer 91), while he was clearly simply indulging his own wants. He tries to contextualize his actions positively. Elements of the anti-conquest are visible on a broader scale as well through the "mythic geography" (9) the cowboys create. Kramer writes that

> The Panhandle was Indian country until 1874. Comanche had taken over the area after 1700, and they kept it for themselves for the next hundred and fifty years, letting in only Cheyenne and Kiowa . . . Kit Carson arrived for an Indian war in 1864, but the first whites who actually came with the intention of staying were the buffalo hunters, and they did not arrive until 1873--which was the year they seem to have discovered that the Army's much-vaunted Indian-treaty "policy" of keeping white hunters north of the Arkansas River was little more than a rumor . . . After that, the cattlemen came in. (38)

The myth is entirely one of displacement. The people of *The Last Cowboy* are out of sync; they don't belong. Henry himself notes, "It's just that no place seemed right . . ." (105) Kramer colors even the first move West as a displacement: they were "crowded out of home and pushing west toward a lost privacy that had more to do with Eastern forests than with Western plains" (7). Soon, "Texans were buying up good pastureland for just a few dollars an acre . . . and there was still so much land left over that the state was able to offer sixteen free square-mile sections in exchange for every mile of track surveyed and laid on its new railroads" (32), she writes. All of this was possible because the "early Panhandle ranches were financed by English or Scottish capitalists" (39). Missing in the minds of the settlers, are the Native Americans.

The "collision" of relationships between people and the land Kolodny alludes to becomes clear in Kramer's description of the landscape. These images show the importance of the metaphor in Henry's life--it has left him utterly desolate: "Henry Blanton turned forty on an April day when

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the first warm winds of spring crossed the Texas Panhandle and the diamond back rattlers, fresh and venomous from their winter sleep, came slipping out from under the cap rock of the Canadian River breaks" (Kramer 1). Kramer writes that there was "something unsettled about his character--something that made him restless and a little out of control" (3); these qualities are in direct response to his relationship with the landscape. It should be noted that Henry is not entirely unsuccessful on the land. His neighbors recognize what a good cowboy he is, and he has established quite a reputation. Yet Henry's conflict with the land is obvious. He hears "moaning ghosts who r[i]de the river breeze" (2).

Kramer provides images of isolation as she relates that the road to the Blanton house begins "as a narrow, rutted cowpath off a highway" (Kramer 11), winds on and on, "tracing enormous curves across the pastures," and then twelve miles later dips "behind a little rise shaded by hackberry trees and cottonwoods" where it trails off into a footpath to their front door (13). Either side of the path is "flat, irrigated land" where the cows stand as if "puzzled and repelled" by it (12). Outside their door is a "sheet-metal barn the size of an airplane hangar," a little hill, a "shabby, solitary willow," wooden pens, and the old chuck wagon Henry's grandfather once used (13). These disparate elements of Henry's landscape reflect his inability to achieve peace.

The land isolates Betsy too, and due to the condition of the cowpath and the Panhandle weather, she spends about two and a half hours commuting every day to work (Kramer 19). Earlier in their marriage, they lived on ranches where camp was "thirty or forty miles from a paved road, ranches where Betsy had to cart water from a spring to do the dishes or wash her babies' diapers" (4). Henry is aware of this isolation but revels in it: "Course it was hard on Betsy. She was lonesome, I guess, with no women around to talk to. And it must of made her nervous, being way out there with a baby to look after and the twins on the way and no water for diapers, no electricity or telephone or nothing . . . I'd rather be a-horseback, thinking, than talking to a woman. Cowboys don't like the company of women much" (102). Betsy's alienation from the land becomes clear during Kramer's description of her two-week stay in the hospital when her appendix burst: "[S]he was having such a wonderful time visiting up and down the corridors,

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talking to people about their troubles, that when the doctor dismissed her she begged him to let her stay" (124).

Betsy's response to the land aligns with Kolodny's discussion of how frontier women reacted to the land, just as Henry's response to the land evidences the virginal/maternal metaphor. Women either viewed landscape by seeing "many delightful prospects," (Kolodny, "Honing" 196) resulting in quilts and gardens, or as the source of violent headaches, resulting in a return to town or back East (200). Both responses can be seen in Betsy's life. She lives on the land and makes the best she feels she can of it by tending to her daughters and keeping the property running smoothly. Yet she "returns to town" several days a week to work as an invoice clerk for a grain-sorghum dealer and yearns to stay in the sociable context of the hospital. Betsy feels not only alone but also vulnerable on the land:

> Betsy's house on the Willow Ranch was small and not very solidly constructed. It had no basement, and Betsy, who worried about tornadoes, had kept it spare and simple, as if she half expected it to blow away one day . . . She knew that the men, out in the pastures, would find a creek or a gully to protect them, but to her mind a flimsy prefabricated ranch house was no place to wait out a tornado . . . (Kramer 127)

The men differed; Calvin, another cowboy, "loved to see the dirt turned, to pick it up and smell it, to sit on a tractor and watch things grow" (Kramer 47). He appreciates the land, but he also wants to see it used for his profit, and he wants to oversee it. Another cowboy asks,

> "See that tree, Ed?" He pointed to a fine old cottonwood over by the pen. It was heavy with ripe seeds, just bursting into bloom. "That's real pretty, ain't it . . . What I mean is this . . . You know what they say about this life being no more than--now, what is it that they say?--no more than a flower blooming. Well, that's what I believe." (59-60)

The men are clearly comfortable with the land. Theirs is an innocent view of the land, but it is not carried out in action; it is anti-conquest. The cowboys use the land in strange ways, such as supporting cattle to provide Americans with the twenty-seven billion pounds of beef they consumed in 1976. The land will probably continue supporting "that appetite," Kramer writes,

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"until no one can afford the cost, in dollars and in lost protein, of the seven or eight pounds of grain that a steer consumes to put on one pound of weight in a feed-yard pen" (62). The cowboys change the land--via fences, irrigation, etc.--to suit their needs, and the land does not always accommodate them.

The land is also used in a transitory sense: "Cowboys call yearling ranches 'calf hotels,' because calves use them like hotels--stopping on their way from a farm to a feedyard for a little grazing, a little fresh air and medicine, and the ministration of an able staff" (Kramer 71). Those who live on the land lack stability. Kramer writes of time after time ranchers and farmers go broke off the land, always fighting to survive. "Memory is short in west Texas," she notices, "and only the cowboys and the rich widows talk much anymore about the good old days of ranching" (77). Yet Henry persists in the anti-conquest: "One thing's true, people sure is jealous of Texas grass," (85) he comments one time.

Henry does appreciate the sunsets now and then just as they are, but largely he appreciates the land for what has been added to it: "This sure is one pretty pasture, with all them windmills," he reflects (Kramer 111-12). His reasons for ascribing value to the land are entirely for profit with no regard for the land itself. He strikes the ultimate irony when he muses, "Course, sometimes I think that if that old lake got polluted and had to be drained away, things might be a whole lot better. I mean, a lot of people would leave, and it'd be a real nice place again" (86). He is oblivious to his own displacement and to the fact that the land does not exist solely for him. He fails to see that his presence on the land displaced others, and, finally, he fails to see that he will be displaced in another sense if he continues to view the land so destructively and possessively.

And Kramer chooses to frame Henry's final failure of the book, effectively, in a foreboding landscape:

> Henry lost his deal with Lester Hill on a day in June when summer seemed to settle over the Panhandle like a cloak of heat . . . The rich spring green of the pastures had begun to fade to the dry dull green of a tough scrub that would keep the cattle working for their

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> nourishment through summer, and by early afternoon that day even the yearlings were sluggish, as if the morning's grazing had taken all the effort they could muster. (138)

Clearly, Henry doesn't have a chance. It is, in fact, the "droughty summer" which Lester uses as his excuse to rob Henry of the calves he had promised him (140).

Henry fights every day to be what he believes a cowboy is: in harmony with the land and "expressin' right." He, of course, achieves neither because he follows the same path the first settlers did. In resolving the tension the metaphor implies, the settlers' practicality took over through their desire for wealth. All movement into previously unsettled areas involved the idea of conquest by its very nature, regardless of the metaphor used to encode the action. With "their technology at once the instrument of wealth and the instrument of penetration into nature's darkest and most hidden precincts" (Kolodny, *Lay* 134), soon no more land existed to settle, and the frustration took on a new aspect. The tension of the pastoral impulse was "finally expressed through anger--anger at the land that had seemed to promise and then defeat men's longings for an ambience of total gratification" (137). That anger at the failure of the myth is clear in Henry. Neighbors noticed him becoming hard on his wife and his animals (Kramer 3-4). Kolodny's hope is that in transforming the landscape metaphor, change in perception can be wrought (*Lay* 159). Language and landscape imagery--the languagescape--become, then, the key to the myth. Examining Kramer's contribution to this issue engenders a way to examine how and if the metaphor is changing.

Since Henry's attachment to myth is embedded in what he says and will not say, language is a crucial aspect of this inquiry. This issue of language is also important because Henry's preoccupation with it reveals his roots in the American psyche. The language he uses is the manifestation of the metaphor and points to Puritan rhetoric. Sacvan Bercovitch writes that the "Puritans were inveterate believers in words" (221) and that their main legacy surviving in our culture is that of rhetoric (219). The Puritan tradition is steeped in "a new American identity that obviated the commonsense limits of history. They took possession by designating America as text and then interpreting the text as themselves . . . whose meaning transcends territorial limits, so that

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it could be extended, in a sort of movable feast . . . to any place . . . that could be invested with the sacral qualities of the myth . . ." (224) This extension includes any movie house and Henry Blanton's Texas. Just as Puritans found their destiny in the Bible, Henry finds his in the movies.

"What happens," Bercovitch poses, "when history severs the symbol from the nation . . ." (228) What happens when Henry's myth is separated from reality? He aspires to be a cowboy in the tradition of Glenn Ford, but he shies away from confrontation, never making it to a showdown until a literary creation crafts one for him. But even then, he cannot prevail. He is unable to revise the cowboy images that dominate him to fit into the changing twentieth century. Kramer shows that he is stifled by the shadows of movie figures and calls upon them--the perpetuators of the myth--as gods. Alfred North Whitehead offers additional insight into this futility which traps Henry:

> The art of a free society consists first in the maintenance of the symbolic code; and secondly in a fearlessness of revision, to secure that the code serves those purposes which satisfy an enlightened reason. Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision, must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows. (88)

Henry's shadows on one side of him are images of his grandfather and father whom he disregards, and on the other side are the movie cowboys he so esteems but with whom he has no real connection. The disparity between the existence of his grandfather and characters portrayed on screen is wide. The real life of a cowboy was not typically glamorous, and the public perception of cowboys until businesses and artists set about changing it was pejorative. "It was in the year 1886--the same year that brought the down-fall of the open-range cattle industry--that the cowboy was fully rehabilitated," Lonn Taylor writes. "In that year there was a flurry of articles and illustrations glorifying the cowboy. . ." (64). Just as settlers quickly used the "virgin land" for profit, the cowboy myth was based on profit.

Kramer recognizes and exposes this false base of the cowboy myth. She writes that the vision of the country was "rooted in Europe" (7) and that even in the 1800's ranchers were busy "turning cattle kingdoms into cattle companies" (10). "It took the rest of the century and the

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imagination of Easterners to produce a proper cowboy--a cowboy whom children could idolize, and grown men, chafing at their own domesticated competence, hold as a model of some profoundly masculine truth" (6). She relates that Henry despises the "insidious Eastern effeminacy that had infected the moral landscape of the West and left a man like him nearly helpless in his outrage" (28-29); Henry's life is clearly directed by bosses in the East and even owners in Europe, and he cannot see that they have dictated the myth all along. "Ranching lately," he feels, "ha[s] less to do with an individual's adventure with a herd of cattle than with that global network of dependencies and contingencies that people had taken to calling 'agribusiness'" (35). He looks down on Easterners and at the same time depends on them: "'I'm going to find me a backer,' Henry told [Tom]. 'Maybe a rich lady from New York. I saw on television the other night that them Eastern ladies got control of all their husbands' money'" (46-47). The commodified cowboy, of course, continues today outside of Henry's interpretation--in cigarette advertisements, for example. Jonathan Franzen describes the classic Marlboro campaign:

> Place a lone ranch hand against a backdrop of buttes at sunset, and just about every positive association a cigarette can carry is in the picture: rugged individualism, masculine sexuality, escape from an urban modernity, strong flavors, the living of life intensely. The Marlboro marks our commercial culture's passage from an age of promises to an age of pleasant empty dreams. (43)

The myth has been thoroughly commodified from the start and remains so, but Henry cannot see through the movie images to the "empty dreams" and the false constructions of reality that lie beyond them. "You got to see old Chill Wills in 'The Rounders' to know what those old cattlemen were really like" (Kramer 56), he insists. Yet film historians and most Americans know that most Westerns are "a deliberate manipulation of a nation's history" (Fenin and Everson 58). Henry's patterning after the wrong images explains his failure to revise the myth. Henry looks to the set, finalized cowboys on screen who are the same each time the tape rolls. Movies of the American West, beginning with *The Great Train Robbery* in 1903 and continuing through today's epics,

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typically present landscape in much the same way Henry sees it. Kramer summarizes the Western scenario well:

> the land and the cattle went to their proper guardians and brought a fortune in respect and power. It was a West where the best cowboy got to shoot the meanest outlaw, woo the prettiest schoolteacher, bed her briefly to produce sons, and then ignore her for the finer company of other cowboys--a West as sentimental and as brutal as the people who made a virtue of that curious combination of qualities and called it the American experience. (10)

The operative phrase here is "proper guardians."

Women, too, played a role in this "civilizing" process, and Kramer's discussion of Betsy reveals key changes in approaching the myth. The Western itself went through several stages of depicting women before it settled near reality. Initially in films of the West, the women were from the East and did not understand the West, resulting in a culture clash (Warshow 65). Women who understood the cowboy were typically prostitutes, independent themselves (66). Shelley Armitage has traced appearances of cowgirl heroines in novels and notes that while early literature portraying cowgirls emphasized the distinct actions of the heroine and her skills, later novels returned to pat stereotypes of woman as either "good" but inert, or active and assertive but sexual (175). The Eastern female often played the role of civilization; women were genteel females and the primary source of refinement in the Western story (Smith 112). Countless movies end with a marriage of the civilized woman and the frontier man, suggesting the happy union which creates America and perpetuates the illusion of successfully living by the code of the Western myth--the synthesis of Eastern civilization and Western coarseness. After the genteel female type came women who were independent but either had grown up as Indians or roamed disguised as men (Smith 112).

Looming in this reality, is Betsy. Kramer does not make Betsy the main character or thoroughly feminize the myth by focusing exclusively on the female roles. Rather, she gives them exactly the weight they are given within the perimeters of the myth itself. This actually works to make her feminization of the myth more effective, because this portrayal suggests the oppression that the women of the myth face. And while Betsy's role is smaller than her husband's, she is the

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active process of civilization in the narrative. The realistic and civilized responsibilities in this story are evidenced by Betsy, who was once "the prettiest girl in her class" but has been "looking tired lately" (22). Kramer feminizes the myth by clearly showing the female as thriving. This is not a reversion to the typical Western in which the female civilizes the savagery of the West through marriage. This is an addendum, an extension, an "and now, the rest of the story." Kramer places Betsy's sympathetic portrayal significantly in the second-to-last chapter, where Betsy's role in the scenario will potentially remain in readers' minds, immediately before Henry's last attempt to gain cowboy authority.

Clearly, this attention to Betsy is not a manipulation of truth by Kramer. She does not paint the females of *The Last Cowboy* as helpless pawns who have no control; they do choose to be part of the myth and have compassion on their cowboy-husbands. Betsy participates in the myth in this sense, so is complicit--as the garden metaphor suggests--although she is not the active force perpetuating the myth. Within the reality of the lived-out-myth, the female characters attempt to carve a life-giving code of their own. Emily has found her niche beside her cowboy-husband, asserting her independence and working with him outside. Annabel stands distinctly behind hers, dedicated to providing Calvin with solace and peace at home through nice meals and a chintz couch. But Betsy struggles, and each attempt she makes leaves her more frustrated and tired. She tries Emily's code and then Annabel's, and neither works for her. Perhaps the other females in the story have gained an amount of satisfaction because their husbands do not merge myth and reality as Henry does; that information does not emerge from the text. But Betsy's struggle is clearly rooted in Henry's misapplication of the myth. Henry is completely oblivious to his effect on Betsy; Betsy says, "He's the most responsible man I know about his job, but not about me" (134). He feels all a woman "should need" are "her home and her babies" (102) and can only respond to Betsy's tears with, "The county's good for a man and a cow, honey, but it's always been hell on a mule or a woman" (122). Here Kramer shows the aftermath of the tidy marriages which often end Westerns, as Betsy tries to find her niche in the land.

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Henry cannot relate to the land because he struggles to grasp a reality outside Westerns; his movie obsession complicates the collision of humans and landscape. In the 1960's, Westerns began to depict the struggle of the plains and reflected a "cynical, anti-heroic attitude toward the West" (Maynard 93). Henry notes this shift: "But the movies were changing--they were full of despair lately" (Kramer 5). Henry objects to this trend and convinces himself that he knows what the past was really like. Neighbors George and Emily try to prod him into seeing the past clearly and adapting: "I sure hope you and Lester Hill got something down on paper about that deal of yours" (84), George says. He continues,

> "You can't go back, Henry," George said. "What if you was still having to go round in a wagon?"
>
> Henry told George that he had a cousin who preferred wagons, a cousin who had stood at the gate to his land with a shotgun when the town came in with orders to lay a paved road. (86)

Henry remains stubborn, and later George counters, "Come on, Henry. Don't tell me about those old days. I was in them. And don't tell me about those antiques, either, 'cause I lived with them." But Henry insists on his view: "I just can't understand why you keep talking about liking progress," Henry replies (88). Robert Warshow writes that once "the true theme of the Western movie" is exposed as "not the freedom and expansiveness of frontier life, but its limitations . . . then even the landscape itself ceases to be quite the arena of free movement it once was, but becomes instead a great empty waste, cutting down more often than it exaggerates the stature of the horseman who rides across it" (69). This cutting down is exactly what happens to Henry when Kramer takes away the gloss of the myth and reveals its stark reality.

These movie interpretations of the myth and Henry's acceptance of them hearken back to Bercovitch's description of the American tradition of rhetoric. For Henry, the cowboy is held together by words: he must express himself as a cowboy. This expression naturally involves more than language; he dresses the part as well, beginning each day in "black boots, a pair of clean black jeans, and his old black hat and jacket" (Kramer 17). But even more prominently and consistently,

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Henry broods over the need to say the right things. Puritans held themselves together in the midst of the colonial tension by "obsessive verbal rituals" (Bercovitch 221), and Henry does the same: in the age of technology, to the "verbal" has been added the visual. Kramer writes that Henry braved nights alone outside by "fixing his thoughts on calm, courageous movie cowboys" (2). He cannot live in harmony with the land, because he is nearly oblivious to it--his focus is elsewhere.

Henry remains equally oblivious to Betsy throughout, further suggesting that he views the two--women and the land--in much the same way. He allows Betsy to work, but begrudgingly and only according to his terms. He stiffens when confronted by her choice, such as when Calvin says, "Least I can say that Annabel ain't no liberated woman. Annabel ain't never run off and worked, like some I know" (Kramer 58). Kramer draws attention to the roles women play in these scenes of *The Last Cowboy*. Her vision seeks out the reality of their lives and choices, and she finds several types, although the types are not the clear-cut ones of the early Western. Kramer hones in on the daily tasks and choices of particular, everyday females who populate cowboy land. Through this discussion, she shows that the myth of the American West is entirely, relentlessly white male, offering no equality for the Native-Americans, Mexicans, African-Americans, or women in the narrative (or in some cases, significantly absent from the narrative).

Kramer, though, frames her story around a white male. By choosing to work within the mythological construct, she is able to both critique the myth and show its power. In fact, she on one level gives credence to Henry's desire for myth in that she grants him the showdown he always dreamed of having. Through her alternating chapters, eventually all the concepts converge when he finds his neighor's bulls intruding on his land, having ruined one of his cows. His reaction to this--"it's like you had a daughter and she was raped" (148)--further shows his land/female link. The futility of Henry's situation is evident from the first. Kramer writes that his fortieth birthday was "the kind of day that Henry would have expected for the showdown in a good Western" (1). Henry would perhaps not term *The Last Cowboy* "a good Western," but it is certainly a new kind of Western, and one that works to lay the entire notion bare. Kramer is not the first to do this, as the revisionist trend beginning in the 1960's demonstrates; but because *The Last*

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Cowboy is a piece of literary journalism, the opportunity allows Kramer to create a unique statement. This is no linguistic exploration of the myth or a fictionalized probability; this is reality that she contextualizes within the myth. She shows how the ideas expressed by Jefferson and fictionalized by Cooper actualize in the life of a real man.

Painfully and ironically, *The Last Cowboy* ends not with a marriage as many of Henry's beloved Westerns did, but with a castration. After Henry finds the bulls who have wandered onto his property, he castrates them one by one; he is liberated by the possibility of violence, and yet his action does not work. He rounds up the intruders and deals with them, making himself feel like a cowboy, at least for a while. The action briefly satisfies him, but when "he had roped and thrown the next bull, he knew that was not expressing right--not expressing right at all--but by then there was nothing he could do about it" (Kramer 148). Some have read this scene as merely a bit of local color[7], but to ignore its place in the wider picture of Western ideology would overlook important implications. Slotkin writes that the first colonists saw the frontier as an opportunity for regeneration and that the means for that regeneration became violence. That myth of regeneration through violence, he writes, became "the structuring metaphor of the American experience" (*Regeneration* 5). Kramer shows that Henry's delusion of power is self-destructive. Not only do his actions fail to satisfy him, but he has virtually been castrated by technology himself just as he uses technology to castrate the calves in his barn, which "was foul with a crust of blood and feces which no spring rain could wash away" (14). His discomfort with "that radio gadget" (85) in his truck, his refusal to sign contracts, his desire for a drawn gun, his rigidity--destroy him. In other words, his insistence on clinging to the code of the West instead of making him the man he so desperately wants to be, ensures that he will never be that man. Ironically, the movies that created his idea of a cowboy are possible only because of the technology he disdains. His conquest-oriented metaphor leaves him completely alienated and out of control. Trapped in his own outmoded model, Henry cannot escape.

More than a fine piece of literary journalism depicting this modern cowboy, Kramer's work addresses our current treatment of myth and its role in our lives. *The Last Cowboy* reminds us to

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examine, as Slotkin suggests, what role myth--consciously or unconsciously--plays in our actions. Maguire, too, finds that contemporary Westerns encode the message that if we are to survive as a society we must see Westerns as a call to transform ourselves (464). *The Last Cowboy* serves as a key point in that process: a true, literary picture of the West in action, minds and metaphors not yet transformed. Indeed, the myth abounds in our society. Slotkin writes that if we can understand where and how the myth originated and "what real human concerns and social relationship the rules conceal or distort," and what historical consequences exist for acting out the myth, we may be able to respond more intelligently the next time the ideas of the myth are invoked (*Fatal* 20), whether via cigarette advertisements, an election campaign, or Henry Blanton.

Kramer pokes through these myth distortions in Henry's world by revealing the impotence he displays in relation to the land and the recurring images of castration. She thus shows the complete futility of the myth of the American West. Just as American landscape was viewed by settlers as both virginal and maternal, the Old West, she seems to say, is both impotent and destructive. Her work may help effect the change in language so important to Kolodny's work and shape the way the frontier--past and present--is viewed in the future. Certainly the myth has a place in American culture, but lived out as reality in the pattern of the earliest white Americans, it does not succeed. Kramer does not seem to provide the full extent of Kolodny's hope--that of a new metaphor for the land--but she does take readers in that direction by exposing the inability of the myth/metaphor to function as reality. She advances the process of recognition, clearly showing the desolation of the metaphor. This paves the way for more work to show how women and men who *have* revised the myth perceive land. How has their success in revision stemmed from a new metaphor? And how must language, the rhetoric of the myth, be used in this process? Henry's and the Puritans' "obsessive verbal rituals" aside, what form of language accompanies a useful application of mythology and a constructive, healthy view of landscape? Further exploration of other works of frontier literature or additional, future literature may illuminate those issues. Kramer's landscape imagery and Henry's clear link to early American perceptions of myth and rhetoric create the unique languagescape of *The Last Cowboy*. That languagescape speaks not just

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to perceptions of frontier life, but to America's historic and contemporary treatment of land. The importance of these issues presented in Kramer's work attests to the power literary journalism exerts as a cultural critique of myths in America.

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Notes

[1] Here "literary journalism" is used as it has been over the past 15 years, and as it has come to be defined, particularly by Thomas Connery, *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992); and Norman Sims, *The Literary Journalists* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984) and *Literary Journalism* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995). Other works that deal with literary journalism include Barbara Lounsberry, *The Art of Fact: Contemporary Artists of Nonfiction* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1990); James N. Stull, *Literary Selves: Autobiography and Contemporary American Nonfiction* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1993); Chris Anderson, *Style as Argument: Contemporary Nonfiction: Contemporary American Nonfiction* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987); Chris Anderson, *Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989); David Eason's "The New Journalism and the Image-World" in *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[2] The ran in two parts as "Cowboy" in the May 30 and June 6, 1977, editions of the *New Yorker*.

[3] In *The Last Cowboy*, Kramer traces the way in which Henry interprets the word "cowboy" and the futility of his particular interpretation. Henry bases his entire notion of being a cowboy on Westerns he has seen and attempts to live in the false world those images create. The action centers on an impending verbal deal Henry has made his immediate superior. Henry refuses to confront his boss about money due him, and he also will not agree to ask for a contract sealing their agreement. As time for the deal draws near, the boss changes his mind. Henry drives around in "helpless fury" and spends the night in his truck. The next morning he finds three bulls from a neighboring ranch wandering on his property. Kramer closes the book with his subsequent act of retribution: he castrates them, accomplishing nothing.

[4] These responses arose during a February 22, 1996, class discussion of an excerpt from *The Last Cowboy*.

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[5] John Pauly, Professor in the Department of Communication at Saint Louis University and author of the forthcoming *Dictionary of Literary Biography* entry on Jane Kramer takes this view of *The Last Cowboy*, seeing it as a continuation of on-going themes Kramer has developed in other works. In that manuscript, he characterizes Kramer's writing as depictions of cultural migrations and disruptions.

[6] Characterizing the land as full of absences is, of course, a decidedly Eurocentric perception of the landscape. Those who first inhabited the land did not note a lack of "signs of civilization," but this view of the land correctly summarizes the way it is perceived in typical Westerns and by the cowboys in Kramer's work, anticipating this paper's discussion of the "anti-conquest" to follow.

[7] Based on a letter dated May 4, 1996, from John Pauly, as he related an experience with a Texan who read the book and responded to the final scene.

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When the Numbers Don't Add Up: The Framing of Proposition 187 Coverage in the Los Angeles Times

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"Frames are chosen by poets because the most important part of what they have to say seems to go better with that form than any other...and then, in its turn, the form develops and shapes the poet's imagination."
---W.H. Auden

Generally speaking, one can make the argument that there are two competing methodologies or philosophies in regard to mass communications research. The methods diverge in their analysis of media effect, among other things. The administrative school of thought often argues for a minimalist interpretation or the phenomenon of "selective perception," while the critical school often questions the ability to accurately gauge media effects at all, especially independent of any social or political context. Instead, critical communications scholars focus more on news frames, power dynamics, and political economy, often creating broad generalizations about media conglomeration and biases in coverage. The schism in regard to these two "schools of thought" is well documented, as the Summer 1983 issue of the Journal of Communication was exclusively devoted to this topic).

What, then, could be made of an analysis of news coverage that would try to involve both paradigms, which are often thought to be mutually exclusive? This is the beginning of my thesis. Using the same data, I will argue that the conclusions reached will, not surprisingly, be very different. It is an approach that is not often attempted, probably due to the fact that communication scholars have found one method more comfortable, and have chosen to stick to that methodology. Our news "item" will be coverage of Proposition 187, the California ballot initiative of 1994 that was directed toward suspending health and educational benefits and services to undocumented immigrants, as well as the children that were born in the United States to illegal immigrants, in effect denying service to those who technically have "legal" status. The details of the proposition, which was approved by the voters in the 1994 election, will be outlined later. In the end, the two separate analyses, while lacking in some comprehensiveness, will clearly show the critical paradigm to be much more satisfying as a research option. The questions it raises, as well as those that it answers, are far more intriguing and intellectually complete.

The analysis of 187 coverage was exclusive to stories dealing specifically with the proposition. Stories profiling illegal immigrants or discussing immigration issues were excluded, for two reasons. The first reason was a simple time consideration; accessing the Los Angeles Times Index from April 1993 to November 1994 yielded a total of 134 articles dealing directly with the ballot initiative, and perhaps twice as many that could have been considered of related interest- Border Patrol stories, a series on immigration, etc. The work load and conceptualization process would be a bit too much to handle in one relatively short paper.

The second consideration was a structural concern. Including any articles that might affect a reader's view of illegal immigrants would raise a number of difficult questions about opinion formation and the like, as well as particular questions about administrative research methodology. These are crucial questions, and will be addressed later on in this discussion. (An interesting side note: Perhaps another study could explore the ability of the Times to keep the issue of illegal immigration alive in its pages long before Proposition 187 was a reality.) Those stories that were excluded ranged in their ideological content, and as such their exclusion does not affect the results of the study significantly. They were not, however, dismissed entirely, as will become clear later on in the discussion of the critical research paradigm.

Nonetheless, articles were included in the administrative analysis only if they could be considered as adding weight to one side of the 187 argument. For the most part, coverage focused on press conferences held by prominent politicians and community activists, "scientific studies" offered by the opposing forces that attempt to measure immigration's costs, and protest events. For example, a press conference that Roman Catholic Cardinal (and local political heavyweight) Roger Mahoney might hold would be a prominent local event, covered on the front pages. If Mahoney were to lash out against 187, offer area churches as safe zones for illegal immigrants, or refer to the proposition as a "moral sin," that would be considered an article with "anti-187" weight. In turn, a profile of a founding member of S.O.S. (Save Our State, the group responsible for the initial signature collecting) where he or she is allowed to outline the pro-187 argument, obviously would be considered to have pro-187 weight.

The Los Angeles Times was used exclusively for three main reasons. The paper has by far the largest circulation of any of the Southern California papers (its current circulation is 1,021,121 during the week), so there is much greater possibility that its coverage reached the most readers. Second, the paper has a broad local focus, in contrast to its closest competitor, the Daily News. The San Fernando Valley is the home of the Daily News, and consequently most of its resources are spent covering the issues that concern Valley residents. Focusing on that coverage would provide an incomplete picture of the Proposition 187 battle. Finally, the Times is a newspaper with what might be called "national aspirations (William Solomon, November 1996, personal conversation)." It is available outside the Los Angeles area, operates its own wire service (in conjunction with The Washington Post), and has bureaus in major cities (Washington D.C., for example). It could be argued that a paper with such an expanded audience might be focused on providing a clear understanding of local issues to readers in other parts of the country, striking a balance between coverage of liberal social activism and the conservative argument in favor of 187.

The topic of this paper, the 187 ballot initiative, offers a unique news event that deserves some attention. It could be misconstrued as an "election" analysis, as it does obviously involve a public vote. However, its features are quite different from a campaign for public office. California ballot initiatives are presented to the voting public if enough signatures are collected to qualify a proposition for the ballot. In a manner of speaking, it is a method of by-passing the state legislature, since the public directly votes on a particular proposal. In this sense, coverage of a ballot initiative in a daily newspaper offers a unique opportunity. Newspaper coverage is a potentially direct method of educating voters about an initiative. Much of the debate over a proposition is carried out in the newspapers, since legislative debate is essentially inconsequential to the vote in most cases. Thus, the importance of the newspaper in a case such as this one is great.

With a general topic and thesis in mind, let us move to an analysis of the two scholarly paradigms. The administrative or empirical method borrows its major assumptions from the work of Paul Lazarsfeld. It often depends on the concepts of selective perception and selective avoidance, contending that selection among items is found "in the field" (Noelle-Neumann, 1981, p.136). This lends credibility to the assumption that the mass media often have very little effect on attitude or attitude change (Noelle-Neumann, 1981, p.137). This is in a decidedly minimalist tradition, but also positivist in the sense that it denies any "inoculation," mass society theories. There is a reliance on the traditional social science methods of data-gathering and organization. Extraneous variables (that are, coincidentally, often those highlighted by critical researchers) are disregarded, and the two-step flow of communication and its very linear, orderly assumptions and procedure are embraced by many as the most effective, scientific way of doing research. Mind you, not all researchers in this tradition accept all of the above principles. What links them together is their faith in traditional social science methodology as it applies to mass communications research, and their collective disregard for issues that critical researchers address. Todd Gitlin offers Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure as examples of scholars doing research in this tradition (1979, p. 246).

There has been a growing body of research that is critical of this administrative paradigm, skeptical of many of its findings, critical of its methods, and uncertain about its assumptions. In empirical research, Melody and Mansell contends the "structure of economic and political institutions...the centralization of power...and the incentive of vested interests are excluded from the analysis (1983, p.104)." Critics charge that empirical scholars ignore the context, political and social, of a given message, instead focusing their attention only on message content. In addition, there is some question as to whether or not such methods can ever be an accurate way of measuring human behavior. Physical phenomena may be suited for "number crunching" but the complexity of human behavior requires a different experimental foundation (Melody and Mansell, p.108).

There are also questions about the implications and goals of administrative research (For a case study, see Gitlin, 1978, 205-253). In our case study we will not bring these ideas into the debate, but it is important nonetheless to know that such criticism exists. Melody and Mansell write that administrative research is "entrapped in a methodological quagmire that permits support only of the status quo (1983, p.107)." Conversely, Lang and Lang contend that empirically-grounded research can be used as a tool against the status quo just as easily (1983, p.128). Clearly, this is a heavily contested area of concern for media studies. It should be said that, in terms of challenging the status quo, critical research is much more prevalent, though obviously not necessarily more "convincing" to most readers.

Empirical research has its own unique historical context as well. Stuart Hall contends that this line of thinking was bolstered as a challenge to the post-war pessimism of the Frankfurt school (1982, p.58), in a push to reinforce faith in American pluralism that was under attack by thinkers like Horkheimer and Adorno. Media effects were not studied in terms of ideology or hegemony, but rather as events interwoven with other social processes. One could just as easily retain information from interpersonal communication as from mediated, formatted message receiving, according to the pluralists. The questions asked never investigated the roots of pluralism or its philosophical underpinnings, but instead focused on proving pluralism's effectiveness as a truly democratic process (Hall, p. 59).

The administrative framework often favors as its experimental model the political campaign (Hall, p.59), viewed as a consumer-oriented choice between two or more expressed categories or options. Direct behavior changes apparently result from opinion changes or the solidification of existing opinion, with most researchers preferring the latter (Hall, 61). In a case such as this, selective perception enables the viewer/reader to appropriate significant material, while selective avoidance guides the media consumer to avoid or ignore messages that fall outside the reader's existing viewpoint.

Our Proposition 187 data will be plugged into a system similar to this one. Our purpose is to detect values in the news, clearly ideological content in news and opinion pieces. Herbert Gans distinguishes between values in the news and values from the news (1979, p.40). The distinction is a difficult one, as he draws a line between ideological content that exists in the stories, and ideological conclusions a reader or viewer might reach that are unintentional. I do not wish to distinguish between the two. Therefore, I will simply try to detect whether or not a given piece lends credibility or weight to one side of the argument or another. Placing these stories in their historical context, I will also try to detect not only the ideological content of individual stories but patterns or shifts in the general ideological thrust of the coverage of the Times.

There are previous studies that are analogous to the present undertaking, though they are not necessarily wholly in the administrative tradition. W. Lance Bennett's 1990 study of ideological similarity and temporal congruity between Congressional activity and press coverage of Nicaragua offers some potential direction and methodology. While our subjects are obviously different, the present study will draw on some of Bennett's empirical methods. Bennett's studies benefits from the nature of his consideration, an ongoing debate in the Congress. As such, he was able to set up specific temporal intervals to work with, analyzing coverage between the given intervals (p.116). In contrast, the 187 case was not subject to this kind of ongoing congressional activity, nor was it predicated on any abrupt or explicit historical events. At best, the supporters of Proposition 187 relied on a sense of a lowered standard of living, but their own evidence ranged from personal experience to outrightr paranoia. In an Oct. 30, 1994 article in the Times, 187 supporter Glenn Spencer described the situation in California as "part of a re-conquest of the American Southwest by foreign Hispanics."

Thus, once the initiative was written, what followed was a very public debate that spanned a number of months. While Bennett was able to compare Congressional activity and newspaper content, the 187 case relied exclusively on newspaper content, with no real legislative processes to serve as a comparison. The point should be made tremendously clear that the present study differs from Bennett's in these crucial areas. Nonetheless, some of Bennett's structural ideas are relevant to the 187 study.

Specifically, Bennett divides the articles into two categories: those that support White House opinion, and those that disagree (p.119). His argument is that reporters cover a given story according to official source information, and that consequently the range of such coverage, when analyzed as an aggregate information source, is as limited as official sources wish it to be. Bennett gives equal voice to opinions, regardless of the status of the person writing or being interviewed, a truly pluralist move. The difficulties that arise from this will be discussed later, although it is probably very clear where such a design could be criticized. Bennett's analysis was pooled from the abstracts of New York Times articles, as he reasons that the general thrust of each piece can be determined from the content of the abstract. My own experience found this to be true as well, in most cases. Where there was some doubt or discrepancy, the actual article was read in its entirety.

With that said, let us review some of the historical background. Proposition 187 was a California ballot initiative aimed at reducing or eliminating state and federal funds to those who could not provide proof of legal residency status, or those whose parents had immigrated illegally. It outlined specific actions for different public agencies. In the school districts, employees would be required to verify the legal status of their students. Community colleges and universities would be required to bar students who were not citizens or lawfully admitted immigrants. Non-emergency health care would be discontinued for those without the required paperwork, and additional social services (child welfare, foster care benefits, and at-risk programs for the blind and elderly, to name a few) would be denied. Police officers also would be required to work in cooperation with the INS to verify the legal status of those placed under arrest.

While the initiative may have been born largely out of nativist tendencies on the part of some Californians (a bitter irony, if one truly extends "nativism" more than a few generation back, where one would find that true California "natives" are now the targets of such legislation) , it also seems to follow a line of thought prevalent in the local media, which had provided consistent coverage of illegal immigration as an ongoing issue facing Californians. The Times ran a series on the Border Patrol throughout April 1993, an extensive and exhaustive series on immigration in the 1990's that was featured on the front page throughout November and December of 1993, as well as a special series devoted to 187 just prior to the election.

In addition to the media coverage, immigration was also an issue for other reasons. The January 21, 1994 earthquake in the Northridge area was the most expensive natural disaster in US history (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 31, 1994, p. A:16), and stories concerning FEMA assistance programs and illegal immigrants were "hot" issues for a number of months, especially in the Times. In addition, the controversy over Zoe Baird's nomination as Attorney General was in full swing, as it was uncovered that she had employed undocumented workers for personal domestic work. As it stood, illegal immigration was being addressed locally and nationally as a potential threat to American values and way of life.

On the legislative/political side of things, the same ideas were resonating. On March 31, 1993, a bill that would have denied illegal immigrants the right to an education was defeated in the California legislature (Los Angeles Times, April 1, 1993, p. A:21). Governor Pete Wilson, perhaps in an action that was in no way related to his prospects for re-election, made several very prominent appeals to the federal government for additional funding to head off illegal immigration, and for assistance to the state in its uphill battle to pay for these services for illegals. This campaign began on January 9, 1994, when Wilson asked the federal government for an additional $1.4 billion in order to pay for social services for illegals. The campaign predictably yielded few results, aside from strengthening Wilson's position as the "tough on immigration" candidate for governor.

The issue of Proposition 187 coverage, then , is not one of a ballot initiative that emerges from the shadows. Instead, the framing of illegal immigration as a threatening trend was well underway, and lent itself perfectly to the eventual campaign to get 187 on the ballot.

My initial hypothesis, prior to research, was that Times coverage of the ballot initiative would rely heavily on official groups and sources, would highlight student protests, and ultimately would be rather neutral in terms of volume- in other words, I imagined that there would be a careful balance between pro-187 and anti-187 articles.

Portions of this hypothesis were validated as I attempted to set up an analysis in the administrative tradition. As would be expected, 1993 was a quiet year, as the election was still a full year away. Nonetheless, articles and editorials appeared in the Times throughout, although not with any stirring regularity. A total of seven editorial/opinion articles appeared, with four of the articles presenting arguments against the proposal, and two in favor of it. An additional editorial appeared to "discuss" the initiative, but offered little in the way of opinion, instead focusing on the essential facts of the case. As our earlier discussion provided, such articles were not included in the analysis due to their lack of any discernible ideological content.

Surprisingly, from the end of 1993 through May 1994 the Times offered no 187 stories whatsoever. The debate began again on May 17, when it was learned that S.O.S., along with various other groups, had gathered the necessary signatures to get 187 on the ballot. What followed, from mid-May until after the November election, was a plethora of articles and opinions, many of which were included in a series dealing specifically with immigration. There were a total of 29 opinion pieces published from July until early November. There were many other editorials that addressed related topics, but they were not included. Letters to the editor also were not included, mostly for the sake of time. In total, 19 of the pieces could be considered anti-187 vehicles, while the remaining ten focused on support of the ballot initiative, usually rather tacitly.

On the surface, that displays a distinct advantage for 187 protesters, at least in terms of volume. Writer ranged from Times staff writers Peter H. King, Robert Scheer, and George Skelton, to outside journalists such as Alexander Cockburn.

I had hypothesized initially that perhaps a shift in editorial position would occur over time, probably getting more anti-187 as the election grew near. Public opinion polls, which were conducted periodically by the Times and included in the News sections, showed a significant decline in support for Proposition 187, with the public deadlocked at about the 50% level at the time of the election (Los Angeles Times, Oct. 27).

Bearing that in mind, I had half-heartedly expected to see a similar pattern in the editorials that were published. However, no such pattern emerged. Instead, the opinion pieces seem to evenly spread out over the course of about four months. The only really intriguing aspect is the shocking amount of time the paper took in revealing its own position on the editorial pages. While editorials about general referendum issues began on May 8, the Times did not print a 187 editorial until October 21, a piece that praised Jack Kemp and William Bennett for taking their stands against the ballot measure, despite stiff criticism from the GOP elite in California. On a side note, political cartoonist Paul Conrad, never one to shy away from critical and controversial local issues, submitted just two works related to 187. It appears that the Times was more interested in not expressing any clear position on the matter.

In terms of news coverage, those stories expressing a clear 187 theme totaled 67 over both years. It must be stressed that the majority, if not all, of these stories expressed as much of an ideological position as the editorials did. In a sense, the fact that they are grouped as "news" stories has very little to do with their adherence to professional objectivity or the "inverted pyramid" style of traditional newswriting. They are, more often than not, the coverage of very partisan, ideologically-saturated "events." They testify to the fact that social groups or collectivities must operate to manipulate the mass media as "event-creating mechanisms (Molotch and Lester, 1974, p.120)." Along these lines, the struggle or legitimacy of ideology was played out on the pages of the Times, but much more so on the news pages than in the editorials (which, incidentally, are included in the Metro section). This may do little to bolster ideas about journalistic objectivity, but so be it. The fact remains that coverage of a politically-motivated event, once a writer decides to maintain an objective mindset, often becomes a vehicle for promotion of the expressed political agenda. A journalist placing him or her self at the "center" does not necessarily provide for a balanced account of the event: "...if you're in the center, your ideology is centrism, which is every bit as much an ideology as leftism or rightism (Barsamian, p.101. Interview with Jeff Cohen)."

Much like the editorial/opinion pieces, the news stories were analyzed in terms of their pro- or anti-187 content. The abstracts for their stories were read in the Los Angeles

Times Index, and their ideological content could usually be gauged from that. The stories consisted of news conferences, "independent" analyses of immigration statistics, and so on.

Like a previous hypothesis concerning editorial content, I had expected to detect a pattern of coverage that would lend itself to the eventual election results, or to the shift in public opinion that happened as the election approached. An alternative hypothesis could be one in defense of traditional journalistic standards and practices, that would predict a near-perfect balance of pro- and anti-187 sentiment. In regard to the latter, the Times coverage was overwhelmingly anti-187, which leads in to a discussion of the first hypothesis. There does not seem to be any pattern at all in the almost 12 months prior to the vote. As we noted earlier, the news stories consisted primarily of coverage of prominent local/national politicians and grassroots groups, as each story in effect added credibility to one side of the 187 debate. There was extensive and exhaustive coverage of student protests against 187, as well as frequent stories concerning the effect that 187 might have on the schools, in particular on the Los Angeles Unified School District. All in all, there were 49 anti-187 stories and 18 pro-187 stories, which was a startling discovery, considering the initial hypotheses.

What, then, is possible to conclude from these facts? Media effect is a tricky, often methodologically questionable field of study. In relation to our administrative model, one could conclude, perhaps rather forcefully, that the shift in public opinion was due in no small part to the Times coverage. Faced with an overwhelmingly negative stream of articles, the voting public turned from its previous position to one of nearly 50-50 division on the issue. On the surface, the argument appears at least partially valid. As the amount of negatively valenced articles piles up, coupled with the negative opinion pieces, public opinion shifts to the negative as well. Now, this does conflict with some administrative thought about minimal effects, but as we stated before, the concept is not one all administrative researchers strictly adhere to. The final 187 vote, with 59% voting for the measure and 41% voting against it, seems to indicate that earlier public opinion polls were more accurate on the matter. A May 24 poll by the Times showed the difference in opinion to be 59% pro-187 and 32% anti-187, as did a poll conducted in early October. Taking that into account, one could make the case for a minimalist interpretation of the data, contending that the majority in favor of the initiative from the start was unaffected by the negative coverage.

However, an analysis of newspaper coverage, or an analysis of media in general, is incomplete if it is discontinued at this point. Here is where the alternative point of view becomes crucial: numbers, percentages, and statistical comparison is not acceptable as the only method of measuring media effect. Arguing that media coverage is slanted in one way or another because of statistical evidence, or pointing out that media coverage is not sufficiently informing the public, is not analysis if it does not dig any deeper. While such acute observations may indeed be true, they fail to link a lack of coverage or improperly balanced coverage with other factors, in essence blaming individual journalists or papers (Parenti, 1986, p.9). The point is clear: a deeper understanding can be gained with a more theoretical, contextual approach.

In a broad sense, all of this work concerns media effects, and as such there has always been some degree of concern that facts could not be adequately measured, graphed, and analyzed as equal inputs in a system. Lang and Lang emphasized the fact that effects can not be understood or conceptualized as "linear" in nature, and that effects research in the pluralist tradition ultimately mirrors market research, a narrowly-based concern with individual responses (1983, p.133).

The similarity between our study and Bennett's analysis is crucial at this point. One of Bennett's initial assumptions is now an important consideration. He weighs each article equally, regardless of whether or not the argument is made forcefully, with no regard to the author, and without considering the source of the opinion. It is a genuinely pluralist viewpoint, but with regard to effect the issue is decidedly unclear. The person or group delivering the message is stripped of any power relationship.

Was Bennett in fact measuring effect? According to his own study, there is little mention of it whatsoever. His thesis was that coverage of Nicaragua operated in accord with Congressional proceedings and White House opinion. There exists in Bennett's data the opportunity to make a very complete, socially grounded argument about the news media, positing that the stream of stories was produced in order to re-inforce public ideology about the Contras and the situation in Nicaragua. Instead, Bennett stops short, analyzing only the numbers. He does not assign a public value to his findings. Bennett could have reasoned that such coverage existed as part of an ideological system, similar to perhaps Chomsky and Herman's propaganda model (see Manufacturing Consent, 1988, Chapter 1). Bennett is indeed very critical of journalistic practices, and even calls for a "return to an independent press willing to exercise independent judgment (p. 124)." However, he fails to broaden his own discussion to include issues of political economy or a sociological understanding of newsmaking. From a different viewpoint, one might conclude that coverage of Nicaragua did not merely demonstrate the ideological similarities between the press and the Administration, or the dominance in mainstream journalism of lazy reporting; instead, it was a means of guaranteeing that public opinion would be uniform on the subject, or that certain issues relating to the Contras would be excluded. That is, however, not Bennett's thrust. Our position will try a little harder to incorporate social theorizing. It is, in essence, asking a difficult question: Are media effects derivative of a larger ideological structure?

Further, in the case of Proposition 187, does "effect" necessarily consist of the vote on the initiative? This is an often unquestioned topic in mass communication research on elections, for it calls into question the most basic of methodological designs. Without such a convenience, research comes to a grinding halt, or is subject to a complete overhaul in terms of its assumptions about media, media's role in society, and power relations as they exist in contemporary society. The arguments to be presented and discussed do not at all make the analysis of news "easier," but perhaps make it more accurate as a method of understanding how the news media operate in a broad, social perspective.

With that in mind, a rejection of the dominant paradigm and research methodology is in order. As Stuart Hall wrote, "Only those who believe that there is a given and an incontrovertible set of facts, innocent of the framework of theory in which they are identified which can be subject to empirical verification according to a universal scientific method, would have expected that to be so. But this is exactly what American behavioral science offered itself as doing (p.58)." The present example, as in most cases, does not provide an "incontrovertible set of facts," but instead a very open-ended mass of data. As we have (and will continue to) seen, the manner in which the data are organized is the most crucial ingredient in the end result we reach.

In dropping the dominant, administrative paradigm, there are two different reasons to consider. On the one hand, the concepts of selective perception and the media as a "representation" of reality leave much to be desired in their implications and assumptions. Selective perception was an empirical finding that showed that media consumers were able to pick and choose from available messages, more often than not finding information that they previously were in agreement with. This falls in line with the minimalist school of thought, but assumes that there are messages for all to "agree" with, or to find ideologically agreeable. This idea supports pluralist thought, as it assumes that mass media messages will, in one way or another, conform with the public's preconceived ideas. The notion of finding nothing agreeable, or in fact finding much disagreeable with the mass media, denies all pluralist arguments, or at the very least complicates them. Media coverage existed as such largely due to the assumption that it was "largely reflective or expressive of an achieved consensus (Hall, p.61)."

As the pluralist argument matured through the years, the conceptualization of the media changed. It moved from being a "reflection" of the external world to a "representation." It is a feature, often an unchecked fact, of much of the work done in the journalism/communications field. However, the very notion rests on shaky ground. The word "representation" is a very accurate one in that it "implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping...the more active labor of *making things mean* (Hall, p. 64). This moves our analysis of news in a different direction, as it assigns the mass media a considerable level of power.

This power dynamic is something sorely lacking in traditional media research. Previous theories had cast message delivery and communication in very one-dimensional terms, as an exchange of information from A to B, with the possibility that B's behavior could change or be reinforced by the message. The existence of other messages or communication options is not included. However, this new "power" model is best understood as such: "Power is also exercised when A devotes energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p.7)." The end result of these ideas is a mass media system that wields the power to define and limit public debate and knowledge, doing so in an active and intentional capacity. The shift to this understanding involves changing the communication paradigm into a two or three-dimensional model, conceptualizing the mass media as chiefly responsible for "shaping the whole ideological environment (Hall, p.65)." In doing so, the media exists as part of an ideological tradition, pluralism, that enables and supports the existing political/economic system to such an extent that there seems to be " a way of representing the order of things which endowed its limiting perspectives with that natural or divine inevitability which makes them appear universal, natural, and coterminous with 'reality' itself (Hall, p.65)." Of course, the notion of maintaining journalistic objectivity fits nicely into this "order of things," both as a professional goal of individual reporters and of the entire journalistic profession.

In short, the accepted media studies model appears to accept these assumptions as well. However, if we define media-society relations as a dynamic power system involving the design of reality via media messages, the power to create symbols appears to involve the capacity to form ideas. It recasts the journalist's role in a very sociologically-grounded manner, conceptualizing the reporter not as an innocent viewer of events but as part of a "culture-producing institution (Golding, 1981, p.67)."

This shift to understanding concepts like "three dimensional model" and symbol-making lends itself to the first step in creating a new model. The groundwork consists of the assumption that journalism exists as part of a system of cultural hegemony. This theoretical orientation fulfills the needs of many communication researchers to incorporate media studies to include "a broader political sociology that places the examination of the press in a social context beyond individual organizations or the journalistic profession (Rachlin, 1988, p.3)."

Defining hegemony involves conceptualizing it not as "thought control" or a fascist state, but as a set of forces that stabilize status quo thinking to such an extent as to make it seem natural. Rachlin considers hegemony to be borne within institutions of socialization, which will "introduce us to manners of thinking, schools of thought, and general world views that are seen as natural- and therefore right (p.24)."

Accepting a hegemonic viewpoint, it is difficult even to conceive of "media effects." The media are re-defined as a component in an involved social system that either endorses status quo thinking or acts as a tool for social control, or both. "Effects" are therefore conceptualized as part of a larger socialization schemata, making them extremely difficult to measure. Thus, separating the news media for such analytic purposes as this must be done with some care, so as not to endorse the idea that journalism exists outside other social institutions: "Investigation of any particular aspect of the media must acknowledge the fundamental nature of their integration within a particular social order (Rachlin, 1988, p.27)."

If one does in fact accept the hegemonic tendencies of news media, then communication and symbol-making, and more importantly the control of said functions, is of paramount importance. Thus, journalism is a crucial element in maintaining hegemony. This is not necessarily performed through state-sponsored censorship or blatant ideological control; rather, hegemony operates via preferred vocabulary, persistent patterns in journalism, and recurrent imagery.

It is important to stress that journalism existing within this hegemonic framework operates according to certain professional principles that journalists are not necessarily aware of. News frames is the most coherent way of understanding journalistic hegemony , as it can be considered the performance of hegemony in the "real world." Gitlin describes frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual (1979, p. 12)." Naturally, frames are not described in introductory journalism textbooks or discussed by news professionals; in fact, frames generally are taken for granted as standard operating procedure, employing methods that on their face do not appear to be hegemonic (Gitlin "News as Ideology," p. 18).

Gans' news values also can be understood as similar to the workings of news frames as well. As such, frames are the "familiarities" of news work, the dominant methods of casting a news story. Frames consist of the unspoken structure of the news story, the characteristics that make the news "readable." News accounts resonate only when they are framed in ways that re-inforce dominant thinking or follow familiar patterns.

In the case of a social protest situation, a news frame would cast the different views as two generalized oppositional positions, with a certain identifiable group pitted against another. This would be an example of news framing at work, wherein an event or series of events is given a specific narrative structure that makes the processing of information more familiar. At its core, the frame ignores dissenting viewpoints in order to present a unified narrative, coinciding with traditional news values. Gitlin offers examples of news framing during the Vietnam War and protests against nuclear energy ("News as Ideology", pgs. 33 and 45, respectively), noting that mass media coverage of protesters and dissenters often distorts their messages, at times even implying violence or social disorder. In fact, Gitlin maintains that the success of social movements lies in their ability to present their messages in accord with the dominant news frames (p.41).

Returning to Bennett's study, he proposes a very similar idea, one that he terms "indexing" (p.106). In this framework, he argues that reporters generally report official source information and conceptualize it as reflective of the entire spectrum of debate on a particular subject. It is assumed that official sources provide both the relevant facts of a situation as well as the necessary ideological balance between different arguments (p.106). In effect, indexing certifies the limits of an argument. It is an analysis that functions well within Bennett's press-state hypothesis, but also applies specifically to the Proposition 187 analysis, and to news frames and hegemony in general.

Perhaps the most illuminating aspect of Bennett's argument (and coincidentally the most useful to the 187 discussion) was the relationship between protests, civil disobedience and the indexing hypothesis. Bennett, borrowing from Todd Gitlin's The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left , argues that when such voices of dissent are included in mass media discourse, the means they adopt in order to gain coverage- protests, marching, or even lawlessness- cast their actions in a negative light. The fact that much of the coverage of the anti-187 campaign consisted of demonstrations and/or student walkouts raises troubling questions for administrative research methods. How are such messages read? True, the message content is anti-187, but how does it resonate with the reader when placed in the "protest" frame? In my attempts to analyze the 187 issue from an administrative point of view, I had conceptualized such demonstration coverage as "anti-187" content, weighed equally as pro-187 opinion pieces. However, it is wholly unclear what the ensuing effect of such coverage may have had on the reader.

These considerations seem to indicate that classifying stories simply as "pro" or "con" is not a sufficient way to gauge behavior or effect. Providing for only two categories strains one's ability to do any real analysis at all. One excruciatingly clear example of coverage in the Times can be considered now as a perfect example of both journalistic irresponsibility and the limits of such a classification strategy. As well, it calls into question the pluralist "equal inputs" approach, which considers each story as having equal weight in the final analysis. On November 4, the front page of the Metro section was emblazoned with the headline "Police to be on alert in case vote sparks violence." The accompanying story explained the possibilities for violent reaction to the vote, and featured a photo of two Compton teenagers being placed under arrest after an anti-187 protest degenerated into acts of vandalism.

The methodological headaches that come with such a story are tremendous. Obviously, the story was classified as a pro-187 story, due mostly to its implied threat of violence. However, dealing with a major metropolitan city that was still recovering from civil unrest two years prior, how seriously could this have affected voting patterns (or, if you prefer, media effect)? Of course, exit polls conducted by the Times did not ask the question "Did our November 4 story scare you into voting differently?," but it is probably a fair consideration. Given that, it seems terribly inadequate to classify the story simply as just another pro-187 piece, balanced out by an editorial on the next page critical of

American nativist tendencies. The two cannot logically be considered equal, but that is precisely what much of the dominant media research is asking us to do.

With frames and indexing also come a discussion of things ignored or ideas not covered. In the 187 case, the examples are easy to find. The day after the election, Thursday, November 10, the front page of the Times featured in the headline the fact that eight lawsuits had been filed within hours of the passage of the initiative. In fact, as the story reveals, the prospects of the proposition standing up in court are slim. These are important ideas that were virtually excluded from the 187 debate prior to the election.

In fact, the Times seems to have been apologizing for certain aspects of its coverage on this Thursday after the election. The front page of the Metro section featured a story that was dubbed "Unflagging Controversy," written by Sandy Banks. The story made a forceful case about the imagery used in mass protests. It consisted primarily of an analysis of the prominence of Mexican flags at anti-187 gatherings, highlighting the negative and potentially hostile reactions of whites to the flags. It was stirring imagery that the Times was not afraid to include in its protest coverage, and it was a point absent from the pages of the Times until after the election was over. However, administrative research methods would consider such protest coverage as "anti-187."

These are but a few of the examples of framing that were apparent upon a closer inspection of the Times' coverage. Why was an October 28 pro-187 gala covered as a "fund-raiser," while anti-187 forces engaged in a "last-ditch effort" and a "$1million advertising blitz" two weeks later? The differences include such subtle differences in language and imagery that fly under the radar of administrative research methodology.

In addition, it is beneficial to recall early statements made about the existence of anti-illegal stories in the Times that were not part of overt 187 coverage. It is impossible to conceive of such stories as not having much effect on readers, but that is precisely what is asked of the researcher when adopting an administrative model. The task becomes a separation of temporal considerations, establishing a beginning and ending point for coverage of an issue without regard to stories existing prior to the starting point. In addition, stories that relate in one way or another to the topic of research are usually discarded, for similarly illogical reasons.

In the end, studies such as this exist to point out such methodological flaws as much as they exist to analyze 187 coverage. Earlier comments in this paper about the research methods being just as important as the actual research content have been validated in this case. The data exists for both methods, but the data can be construed in entirely different ways. However, when one conceptualizes the role of journalism as an institution deeply embedded in social processes, responsible for ideological uniformity and reflective of cultural patterns, the administrative model seems absolutely inadequate to deal with all of the additional, "extraneous" information.

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Anti-Drinking and Driving PSAs: Do They Have Any Meaning to Underage College Students?

Implications for PSA Designers

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Anti-Drinking and Driving PSAs: Do They Have Any Meaning to Underage College Students?

Implications for PSA designers

Although the United States has one of the safest highway systems in the world, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that the portion of U.S. accidents involving alcohol is one of the highest in the world. Each year, more than two million drunk driving collisions occur in the United States. Many of these accidents involve young drivers. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, "Although young people make up only ten percent of the driver population and account for only six percent of the vehicle miles traveled in this country, they represent 17 percent of all drivers involved in accidents and 16 percent of all alcohol-impaired drivers in accidents" (NHTSA 1985, p. 2).

In 1992, the Department of Transportation reported that more than 40 percent of the deaths of 15-to 20-year olds resulted from motor vehicle crashes, and that about half of these fatalities were alcohol-related crashes. In 1989, there were 1,607 of 100,000 drivers arrested for DUI between the ages of 18 and 20 (Cohen, 1992). There certainly exists the problem of underage drinking and driving on U.S. highways. Much of this underage drinking occurs among college students. A study of college students' drinking patterns and behaviors found that younger students drank more heavily and exhibited more problems related to drinking than the older students, who "are also more likely to drink in moderation as they progress through college" (Engs 1988, p. 669).

The consumption of alcoholic beverages in college is not a recent phenomenon; it dates back as far as the 18th century. In a 1987-'88 survey of 2,657 college students at 4-year colleges and universities across the United States, Engs and Hanson found that: (1) 34% had driven a car after having several drinks, (2) 49.2% had driven a car when they knew they had drunk too much, (3) 37.3% had driven a car while drinking, and (4) 1.6% had been arrested for driving while

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intoxicated (1988). Although the legal drinking age is 21, it is not difficult for underage college students to obtain alcoholic beverages (Wagenaar et al., 1993). Most college students begin drinking in high school; yet the freshman year in college is becoming known as "an increasingly popular rite of passage" (Roan, 1994, p. E-3).

Another drinking behavior prevalent on college campuses is binge drinking. This is a term which refers to "the consumption of five or more drinks in a row for men, and four or more drinks in a row for women" (Weschler et al., 1994, p. 1672). Binge drinking has emerged as one of the unhealthiest aspects of college life, particularly for freshmen, who drink just to get drunk (Roan, 1994). The high incidence of binge drinkers on college campuses equates to higher rates of drinking and driving. Frequent binge drinkers often refuse to see their drinking behaviors as a problem, and thereby fail to recognize the potential consequences to their actions. Many binge drinkers learn to drink and drive simultaneously, even though independently, they might not do either particularly well (Landstreet, 1977).

To combat the problem of drinking and driving, mass media campaigns have been employed. Public service advertising is a highly visible communications strategy used often to promote health issues such as drinking and driving (Dorfman & Wallack, 1993). Brewing companies have also run campaigns to promote responsible drinking. Anheuser Busch's "Know When to Say When," Coor's "Now, Not Now," and Miller's "Think When You Drink" campaigns all attempt to discourage drinking and driving. However, these campaigns have been met with limited success. These responsible drinking campaigns do increase people's awareness of the drinking and driving problem; yet at the same time, many of them communicate mixed messages. In most of the slogans, the message is ambiguous (Jacobs, 1989). Critics of these ads feel that they fail to emphasize that driving after any amount of alcohol can be fatal. Instead, they reinforce the public perception that the problem is not drinking and driving, but rather drinking too much and then driving (DeJong et al., 1992).

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As a potential solution to the drinking and driving problem, the concept of the designated driver arose. For the most part, college students have adopted the use of a designated driver, and this strategy does help with the immediate problem of keeping alcohol-impaired drivers off the road (DeJong et al., 1992). But in many cases with college students, either of age or underage, the designated driver is not someone who abstains from drinking. Rather, the designated driver is the person who drinks the least. This benefits the alcohol industry, but does not necessarily combat the drinking and driving problem (Ross, 1992).

In addition, many organizations, such as MADD and the Ad Council, have tried to curb the drinking and driving problem by designing campaigns which display the fatal results that can occur upon drinking and driving. Many use fear appeals as a possible deterrent. Yet in order for fear appeals to be effective, the ad must elicit the intended emotions from the receiver of the message, and the receiver must feel that the consequence presented in the ad is likely to occur (Chu, 1966). This coincides with Rosenstock's Health Belief Model (1974), which can be used as a framework for this study.

The Health Belief Model purports that in order for a person to change a health-related behavior, that person must believe the problem is serious and that he is personally susceptible, that changing the behavior will reduce the risks involved, and that the benefits of behavior change will outweigh the costs. Because so many college students drink and drive, it can be assumed that they do *not* believe that they are susceptible to the risks, and therefore, have no reason to change their behaviors.

A PSA will be effective only if it is geared toward a specific audience, and if the message contained within it is one with which the desired audience can relate. There have been periodic public education campaigns against drunk driving for decades, particularly directed toward college students. Yet college students continue to be overrepresented in the number of

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drinking and driving accidents that occur in the United States. In other words, they still drink and drive despite advertising against it (Stearn, 1987).

Taking these factors into account, perhaps the Health Belief Model can be used as a guide for PSA designers. It can be inferred from the research that if PSAs are to change underage students' drinking and driving behaviors, they must address all of the factors in this model. In order to do this, it is first necessary to determine underage students' reactions to drinking and driving, what they perceive the risks to be, and whether or not they think themselves susceptible to the negative consequences that car occur.

The purpose of this exploratory study, then, is to determine what college students actually fear when they drink and drive, and what messages, if any, would have relevance to them. Again, before we can apply the Health Belief Model, we must first understand underage college students' perceived risks, susceptibility, and fears about drinking and driving.

Method

This study takes a qualitative look at underage college students' drinking habits and their feelings and attitudes toward drinking and driving. It employs an interpretive method of examining at college students' drinking behaviors and the concerns that are important to them. According to Thomas Lindlof, "Qualitative researchers strive to *understand* their objects of interest" (1995, p. 9). Qualitative methods rely heavily on the assumption that in order to produce anti-drinking and driving PSAs that will mean something to college students, it is first necessary to find out what their drinking behaviors are, whether or not they drink and drive, and what meanings, if any, anti-drinking and driving PSAs have to them.

Participants for the study were obtained from a large lecture class taught at a southeastern university. Participant selection was based on responses given in a preliminary questionnaire to assess drinking behaviors. The categories used in selection were gleaned from a breakdown contained in a 1988 study of college students' drinking patterns (Engs & Hanson, 1988). To be eligible for the study, participants had to (1) drink alcoholic beverages at least twice a month, (2) drink at least three drinks at a time, and (3) be between the ages of 18 and 20.

Eighteen students participated in four focus groups. Focus groups were used as the initial form of research because they are useful in "generating hypotheses based on informants' insights," and in "developing interview schedules and questionnaires" (Morgan, 1988, p. 11). Focus groups are an excellent method of fostering group discussion and therefore were chosen as a research method for this study. The groups were homogenous with respect to sex; two groups were male, two were female. Each gender category was then further divided into "heavy" and "light" drinkers. Light drinkers were defined as those students who drank more than twice a month, but less than once a week, and who drink less than five drinks per sitting. Heavy drinkers were defined as those who drink more than once a week, and consume five or more drinks at one sitting.

Once the focus groups were analyzed, eight in-depth interviews were conducted. Interviews were chosen as a research method because an interview "gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (McCracken, 1988, p. 9). This was especially relevant to this study, because in order to portray meanings in PSAs that are relevant to college students, it is first necessary to see the world as they see it, and find out what is important to them. Four of the interviews were with male participants, and four were with female participants. All were labeled heavy drinkers. Based on the focus group findings, the information that heavy drinkers could provide would be more pertinent to the study, for they are more likely to drink and drive.

The research guide for the focus groups served as a "rough travel itinerary" with which to moderate (McCracken, 1988, p. 37). The researcher used a combination of grand-tour questions, floating prompts, and planned prompts. The grand-tour questions, defined as "opening, non-directive questions," allowed the respondents to tell their stories in their own words. Floating prompts are spontaneous questions that arise from a need to clarify something the respondent has said. Planned prompts were used to guide each question to a desired topic and were "not asked, until and unless, the material they are designed to elicit has failed to surface spontaneously" (McCracken, 1988, p. 35).

The research guide was developed using a funnel-like technique. This method allowed for a more thorough discussion of relevant background information by beginning in an exploratory fashion and becoming more directed as the research progressed. The focus groups and interviews began with very broad questions about drinking and became more specific. The discussion eventually progressed to the topic of interest, anti-drinking and driving PSAs. Additional questions were added to the interview guide once the focus groups were completed. Topics that emerged from the focus groups were explored more thoroughly in the interviews.

Each of the focus groups and interviews was transcribed by the researcher. Information from the focus groups and interviews were analyzed for themes emerging from the research. The transcripts were coded using the constant comparative method. The constant comparative method is an inductive process in which commonalties and differences are analyzed and formulated into categories of interest (Lindloff, 1995). Each of the transcripts was analyzed by two coders, who independently defined emergent themes.

Furthermore, to fulfill the qualitative criterion of credibility, member checks were performed. Member checks are "opportunities for the researcher to test hypotheses, concepts, interpretations, or explanations with members of the local culture he or she is studying" (Lindlof, 1995, p. 240). To test the findings in this study, eighteen underage college students were questioned about the themes that emerged from the research. These students concurred with what participants said about drinking behaviors, as well as attitudes toward drinking and driving.

Results

Eight categories emerged from the data. Those categories were: drinking behaviors, ease of alcohol acquisition, pressure, parental influence, misconceptions, consequences, drinking and driving, and public service announcements.

Drinking behaviors

Most underage drinkers began drinking alcohol when they are in high school. Almost all of the participants in this study had begun drinking before they came to college. Once participants left high school and entered college, their drinking behaviors changed. The importance of drinking also changed as people moved from high school into college. Participants saw drinking as being more important in high school than in college because in high school, alcohol was not as accessible. For many students, the newfound independence that goes along with college leads to increased drinking, because at that time, drinking without parental supervision is a novelty, and alcohol is more available.

Participants said that college students drink not only because they are free to do so, but also because drinking makes it easier to be social. A few participants differentiated between going out to clubs and being at a party. They said there was a difference in whether or not you *had* to drink, depending on where you go out. As one participant noted:

> Like when you go to the clubs and stuff, everybody's drunk there, you're just one of the crowd. You almost have to have a drink in your hand or you're looked at like, why isn't she drinking? I think that people feel a lot more comfortable, too, if they're drinking, or at least if they are holding a drink. Also, when you're at a club, you can't be there sober when everyone else is drinking. You can't deal with a crowd of drunk people when you're sober and everyone else is drunk. It's really difficult (Female, heavy drinker).

One of the most common terms to emerge from the study was the term "big deal" as it relates to drinking. Drinking in high school was a big deal because it was not done as often, nor was it as easy to do. Drinking in college is a big deal because students are free to do it. Some participants also believed that in other countries, however, drinking is not seen as a big deal, because it is a common practice overseas. One participant said:

> In the States, parents really tend to watch over their kids and protect them more. In other countries, kids mature faster, and they're given more responsibility for their own actions. Plus, they're taught that drinking is not a big deal, so they never look at it like that. When you go out with your parents for dinner, there's a bottle of wine on the table, and everyone drinks it, including the kids, so it's not something that's as restrictive as it is here (Male, light drinker).

Ease of Obtaining Alcohol

Whether it be in high school or college, all of the participants reported that getting alcoholic beverages is not difficult; on the contrary, it is easy. If you are under 21, there is always a way to get alcohol if you want to drink. Even though many places, including clubs and liquor stores, require you to show proof of age, many participants say that this is not a problem. Many use fake identifications, or get older friends to purchase alcohol for them:

> It's like, really easy to drink here. I mean, we have a lot of friends that work as bouncers at clubs, and if you know someone, you can get in like that. I mean, it's so easy, and nobody checks, they just look for your band, and that's it. If you know someone who works there, you're in (Female, heavy drinker).

Pressure

Whether it is direct or indirect, many participants feel that there is pressure involved with drinking alcohol. The amount and type of pressure changes as one moves from high school to college. Many feel that there is more pressure to drink in high school, but that the pressure is there in college as well. One female heavy drinker said, "It's not exactly peer pressure, maybe like social pressure." In other words, participants felt that no one forces you to drink in college, yet if you're not drinking, you don't feel like one of the crowd.

Drinking and Driving

Drinking and driving is a common practice among these college student drinkers. Participants felt that knowing one's own drinking limit is important in deciding whether or not to drive. Yet many students choose to drive even when they know they have reached their limit.

Many overestimate their driving abilities after they have been drinking. Often, students know they are not capable of driving. But many times, they find excuses for driving under the influence. Even though other alternatives are available, often the benefits of driving home outweigh the perceived costs. One participant said, "I live real close to downtown, and I'm like, I can make it, it's not that far. That outweighs having to get up in the morning, having to come get the car downtown. When you leave a bar, convenience is more important" (Male, heavy drinker).

Participants admitted that often times, they cannot tell whether or not they are driving a car well. Because perception is impaired when driving under the influence of alcohol, students may think they are driving fine when they are not. Many said they have their own ways of determining whether they are intoxicated. One female light drinker said that she distinctly recalls a time where she drove home drunk, and thought she was driving well. "I found out that my friend was following me and he told me that I was weaving in and out of lanes, and I thought I was concentrating. He said he got up right next to me, honking the horn, and I didn't even look."

Responsibility plays a major role in the decision to drink and drive. Not only do people have to be responsible for themselves, but also they must feel responsible for the people they are with. Some participants do not feel comfortable with that responsibility. A number of female participants generalized that females are more responsible than males when it comes to drinking and driving. Some contend that males are "macho," and therefore say they are able to drive, when, in fact, they are not.

In order to avoid drinking and driving, many students designate a driver before they go out. But those participants who are the designated drivers do not enjoy the task. One participant noted:

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> When we go out, I'm the designated driver...you kind of don't have fun sometimes when you're not drunk. It's like, the other person is drunk, and then you have to take care of them, and they're a drag to be around (Female, light drinker).

Often times, people do not designate drivers beforehand, but rather, they see who is in the best condition to drive when the night is through. Many participants agreed that usually, the person who has had the least to drink drives home. One female heavy drinker said, "Whoever can put the key in the ignition is driving." Another participant said that she feels that even though she has been drinking, she knows that she is the most responsible person in her group of friends, so often she drives home, even when she is not sober. If one person in the group offers to drive, that is usually acceptable to with the others. One female participant explained:

> The sad thing about it is, once it's time to go, a lot of times, if you're not the one driving, it's because you can't be driving. So your judgment is so out of whack, that you're really not in any position to judge someone else. If someone tells you, "Look, I can drive," you believe them because you can't drive yourself. It's ridiculous to say I do that, but that's pretty much the way it goes (Female, heavy drinker).

Parental influence

Many college students' drinking behaviors and decisions are based on their parental influence. A number of participants said that their drinking habits stemmed from watching and learning from their parents. Some participants said that their parents knew that they drank. In many cases, their parents let them drink at home, where their parents could watch them, teach them to drink responsibly, and avoid drinking and driving. This may lead to more responsible drinking habits in college:

> I'm glad my parents let me drink, because otherwise, I probably would have gotten to college and done something really stupid when I got drunk, because I never would have had that opportunity before (Female, light drinker).

Many parents accepted the fact that their children drank alcohol. They did not necessarily approve, but they were more concerned with teaching their children not to drink and drive than not to drink at all. Participants whose parents encouraged them to call for a ride if they couldn't drive and whose parents taught them responsibility about drinking are sometimes less likely to drink and drive. One male heavy drinker said, "The parents who are more understanding, who teach their kids to be responsible, have kids who don't drink and drive. They don't feel they have to. They can call mom and dad to come get them and not have to worry about getting grounded." Participants felt that those parents who taught responsible drinking, rather than abstinence, were more realistic, and therefore, had more responsible children.

Misconceptions

Many college student drinkers, for whatever reason, do drink and drive. Some feel that even though they are above the legal limit, they are not too impaired to drive. Others think that accidents will not happen to them. Many of them try to justify their drinking and driving behaviors by distorting the truth. Some participants have misinterpreted statistics and have developed false ideas about the drinking and driving problem in college towns. One male heavy drinker felt certain that drunk driving accidents happened to older people who drink to "vent their anger." He didn't think that drunk driving accidents happened to college students. Another heavy male drinker justified that when drunk, driving is easier than walking, because drivers just "have to press the gas and steer." When you walk, he maintained, you have to use balance and equilibrium.

Other participants felt that if you don't have a long way to drive, then usually it is safe to drive drunk:

> It's easier to drive in town...you really don't have to go that far anyway. I mean, there's stop lights on every block, so it's safer, because you have to drive more carefully. You stop at every street, and the speed limit is only 30, so there's less chance of really getting into a serious accident (Male, heavy drinker).

Perhaps the biggest misconception that college students have about drinking and driving is that nothing bad will happen to them; there is a distinct feeling of invincibility among many college drinkers. Many make a distinction between drunk drivers and impaired drivers. They do not think they are really drunk, and because they believe accidents only happen to drunk drivers, they believe they can drive. One female participant explained:

> People have this "it's not gonna happen to me" attitude. that's why they drive, they honestly think nothing can happen to them. Some people know they're too drunk to drive, but it's convenient, they don't have to pay for a cab, they don't have to call one of their family members to come and get them, and they think, "I'll just risk it, it's not gonna happen to me (Light drinker).

Because many college students do not think that they can cause drunk driving accidents, they continue to drink and drive without even considering that consequence.

Consequences

The effects of drinking and driving can affect college students for the rest of their lives. Although one of the most commonly portrayed consequence is getting into an accident and killing somebody, this is not something underage college students think about. Rather, they are more concerned with getting pulled over and getting a DUI charge, even though many college students do not know the implications of being charged with that crime. Participants said that killing people and getting into accidents does not scare them as much as getting pulled over when they are drinking and driving:

> I don't know what was wrong with me, but the times that I did drink and drive, I wasn't scared getting into the car. It gets a little scary when you're looking ahead of you and you can see the road, but your eyes are kind of shaking, and that's scary. The only thing I'm scared of is cops. They're always parked somewhere. I'm always looking at the speedometer, making sure I'm not speeding (Female, light drinker).

> I was scared of getting caught, not of hitting anybody. I thought I was really really drunk and that I was swerving and everything, and I always had this thing in my head about people getting pulled over for swerving and stuff. I wasn't sure if I was or not, but I was just...if I got pulled over, I was dead (Male, heavy drinker).

A few participants said that because they're not scared of getting into an accident, only of being charged with a DUI, they will drive in the car with somebody who's driving drunk, but they will not drive themselves. One rationalized that as long as he is sitting in the back seat, he will be fine.

> There's no fear of driving [if you drive with someone else who's drunk]...I'm not scared I'm gonna die for some reason. I'm not saying I'm not scared, I'm thinking I won't die, that's all I'm saying...I don't sit in the front with people who are drinking and driving, because I think you have a better chance of surviving an accident in the back...that way, I figure, if they hit someone, I'll just ram into the front seat (Male, heavy drinker).

Even though getting pulled over was cited as students' main concern, many participants were skeptical of the police. A few even stated that police officers are too lenient, and that they often let underage drinkers go free:

> Cops don't even care. I mean, I remember one time in high school I was at this party and these two guys we were out with got into this really big fight and one of the guys went to the hospital. I was totally drunk. And the cop is sitting there asking me questions and it was very obvious that I was drunk, and he didn't do anything. Nothing happened (Female, heavy drinker).

Even though many people suffer the consequences of a DUI, or see someone else getting into trouble, often this is not enough to make students change their behavior. Many participants agree that the consequences have short-term effects, and that fears wear off after a while. Many agreed that until something bad happens to you, you do not think about what can happen. They claim that for the most part, they see no real reason to be afraid.

Public Service Announcements

Print anti drinking and driving public service announcements directed toward college students typically contain one or two scenarios: A totaled vehicle, or pictures of innocent people, mainly children, who have been killed by drunk drivers. When participants were shown advertisements such as these, they admitted that they were powerful, but not powerful enough to stop people from driving drunk. Participants agreed that while these are effective when they are seen, the threat does not carry over when they are out drinking because they do not feel that the consequences are pertinent to them.

Many participants felt that the ads featuring innocent people killed by drunk drivers were more effective than the ads with the wrecked cars. One female participant said:

> The people make people realize more who they can hurt. The ones with the kids have a lot more effect than seeing a mangled car. People see mangled cars in accidents all the time, and it doesn't necessarily mean drunk driving. When you see little kids who have dies, I think that really gets people (Light drinker).

When participants were asked what would make an effective public service announcement, many replied that the ads have to "hit home." Many mentioned that the ads shown were good, but that in order for them to work, they would have to be more localized. One female heavy drinker said, "In those print ads, they tell you the street the person was killed on. Well, I don't know where that street in Washington state is. But if I read that he were killed on [a local street corner], it would have greater impact, like it could happen right here." Other participants said that realism is important. In other words, college students respond to what happens in their college town, and the closer things are, the more realistic they become.

Localization was one method offered by participants. Some offered other ideas as to what would be effective in an anti-drinking and driving PSA:

> The ads have to be shocking. Shock has impact. Gruesome things have impact. You have to have a shock value that will take the mind of a typical college student that is concerned with grades, getting a degree, and going out and having a good time. Changing that philosophy from let's go out and have a good time to let's go out and have a good time and be responsible about it. The only way you can do that is to convince people that it can happen to them. Make them uncomfortable. People are far too comfortable with drinking and driving (Male, heavy drinker).

> There's ways you can get drinkers' attention...Big posters on the way out of bars, that may work, at least on some of them. Let them see that these kids were killed by someone just like them when they were leaving a bar drunk. It may encourage them just to let someone else drive. But localizing the posters would help. Have a poster of a kid killed in [a local town]. That way, they'll know it happened nearby, and it could happen there again. An ad like that might reach a few of them [drunk drivers] (Male, light drinker).

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to determine what meanings current anti-drinking and driving PSAs had to underage college students and what techniques, if any, may be more meaningful to them. Participants from both the focus groups and interviews provided a great deal of information about college student drinking behaviors and attitudes about drinking and driving. These participants indicated that underage drinking is prevalent on college campuses because it is so easy for underage students to obtain alcoholic beverages.

Because alcohol is so accessible, it appears that there is little chance of putting a stop to underage drinking. As Engs & Hanson (1988) reported, 81 percent of underage college students drink, which is higher than the proportion of legal-aged (75 percent) students who drink.

Participants said that underage drinking is a regular part of college life, as is drinking and driving. The problem is not convincing students that drinking and driving is wrong. Most of them know that. What they do not consider are the possible implications of driving under the influence and the effects that alcohol can have on other aspects of their lives.

Students in this study said that when it comes to drinking and driving, many times, they do not even think about it. When they are drinking, they do not think about the possible consequences of their actions, nor do they think anything will happen to them because many are convinced that they are not too drunk to drive. Additionally, they believe that because drinking is accepted and expected in college, it is permissible for them to drink.

Yet, there are also other factors that influence underage drinking, including social pressure. Participants contended that while there is not any overt pressure to drink, there is social pressure involved with drinking. Parental influence was also cited as a foundation for drinking behaviors. Those participants whose parents focused on responsibility rather than abstinence believe that focus influenced them. Many were taught at a young age that alcohol should be consumed responsibly. A few reasoned that because young people in Europe are exposed to alcohol early in their development, they learn to be responsible about it, and tend not to drink to excess. By the same token, participants whose parents exposed them to alcohol early on were also less likely to drink and drive. Their parents accepted the fact that they were going to drink and were more concerned that their children not drink and drive. Those whose parents did not teach them that responsibility "went crazy" at the first bit of freedom.

One of the biggest problems concerning underage drinking and driving is that when a person is drinking, he loses control of his thoughts, and cannot make rational decisions. Participants in this study said that even though they know that drinking and driving is wrong when they are sober, they do not think about the consequences when they are intoxicated. When a person is drunk, he does not have control over his actions, and therefore, likely will not change his behavior.

Participants in one focus group suggested that advertisements placed in bars that students could see on the way out the door, may remind these students not to drink and drive. Almost all participants in this study felt that while PSAs are effective when they are initially seen, they are not remembered when people go out and drink. Putting poster-size PSAs in bars and clubs could serve as a trigger, reminding students not to drink and drive when the message is most needed.

Participants also said that anti-drinking and driving PSAs do not touch upon their biggest fear: getting a DUI. This is, perhaps, the most valuable piece of information to come out of this research. Because most anti-drinking and driving PSAs feature consequences to which college students do not relate, they are anything but effective. This has significant implications for PSA development. Perhaps if this consequence were portrayed in PSAs, students would change their drinking and driving behaviors.

Participants in this study also said that they drink and drive because they feel that when it comes to getting into accidents, they are invincible. One participant even went so far as to say that he will drive in a car with a drunk driver because he does not think he will be killed. He will not drive himself, however, because he thinks he can get pulled over. Therefore, advertising needs to challenge students' feelings of invincibility and make them believe that every time they get into a car when they have been drinking, they run the risk of getting into trouble, whether they are driving or not. Virtually all of the anti-drinking and driving PSAs directed toward college students use fear appeals to persuade them not to do so. Participants agreed that the use of fear works. The problem is that current ads do not address the consequences that college students fear.

Most participants said that they do not think that they will kill a child when they get behind the wheel of a car and that the ads that show this consequence are ineffective. Because college students do not think about getting into accidents, and do not think they will kill others, advertisements that feature these scenarios will not have meaning to college students. Fear appeals, therefore, must be used in conjunction with consequences that college students fear: getting a DUI, going to court, paying huge fines, and risking their futures. Otherwise, the ads will be disregarded.

In addition, participants suggested that in order for anti-drinking and driving PSAs to work, they have to "hit home." In order for ads to hit home, they must bring the problem closer to the target audience. Combining these factors suggests that localized ads featuring college students being charged with DUIs at bars and clubs they can clearly recognize will lead to increased concern about their chances of getting caught by police. This, in turn, may result in a decrease in drinking and driving among college students.

Many students in this study also thought that using innocent children in ads was effective, but that because the accidents shown in the ads did not happen nearby, they did not have a profound effect. Advertisements showing innocent children killed in places familiar to college students would bring the problem closer to home and would make college students aware that this could happen to them if they drink and drive.

It is important to note that in order for localized campaigns to have the desired effect, sponsoring cities and counties must be willing to spend the money to enforce supportive policies. Showing college students getting handcuffed in front of a local bar will only be effective if this actually happens. Local government officials and police officers must work with anti-drinking and driving organizations in order to devise local campaigns to combat the drinking and driving problem.

This study suggests a number of implications for designing PSAs to curb the drinking and driving problem among college students and poses a number of challenges for PSA developers. Again, the Health Belief Model can serve as a guide. In order for PSAs to induce

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behavior change, they must address those consequences that college students fear, and they must be presented in such a way as to increase college students' perceived susceptibility toward those consequences. Local PSAs that feature local students being pulled over and charged with DUIs will certainly be more relevant than current, national campaigns. The results of this study suggest that if PSAs would make college students see drinking and driving as a serious problem that could affect their lives, and would portray being charged with a DUI as a realistic, negative consequence of drinking and driving then perhaps behavior change will be more likely.

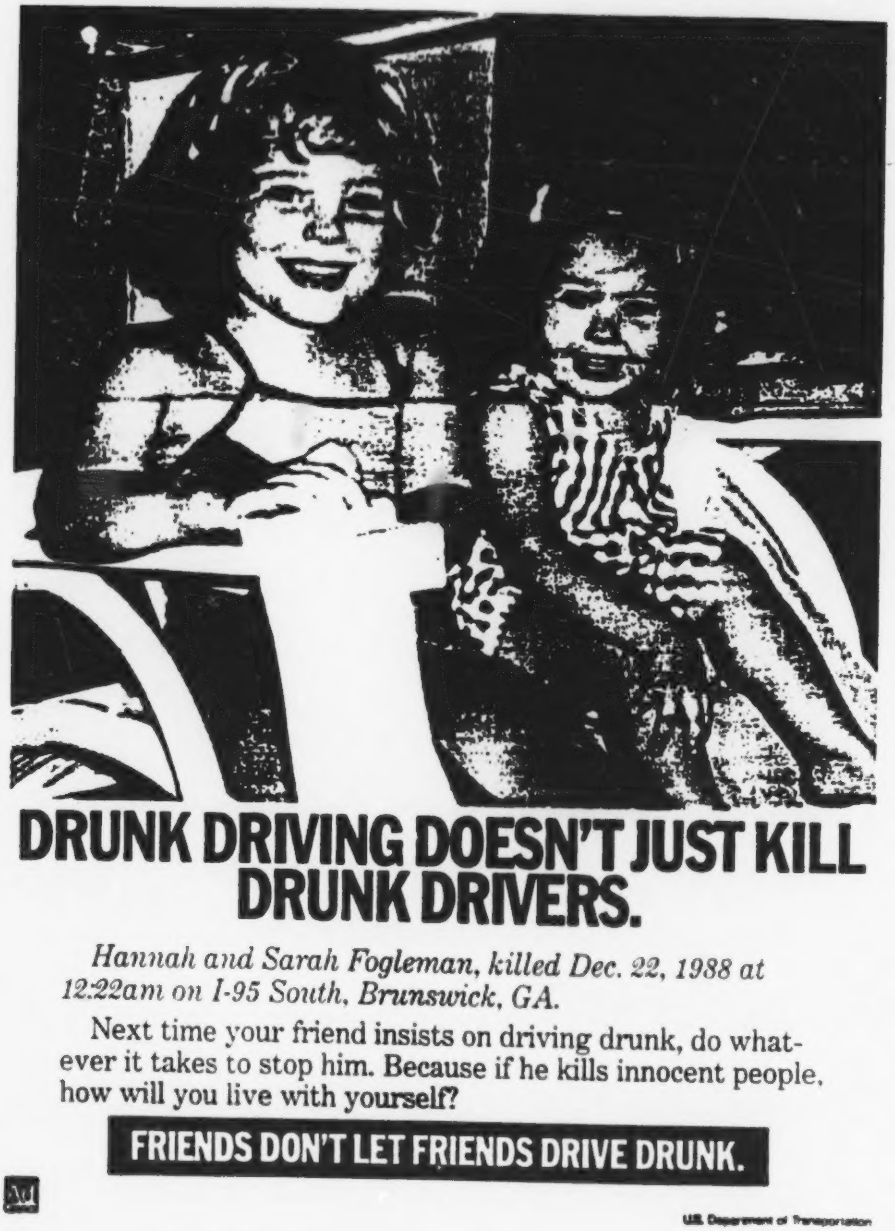
Future Research

Although this exploratory study presents a lot of useful information for PSA developers, the next step is to verify that the findings are generalizable to a larger college student population. A survey will be designed using specific ideas that emerged from this study.

Assuming that the survey results concur with the findings in this study, PSAs could be devised. Experiments then could be performed to test the effectiveness of different anti-drinking and driving PSAs among college students of all ages. For example, in order to test localization, advertisements featuring underage students being arrested for DUI at local bars and clubs could be designed and shown to members of this age group to determine their effectiveness.

Experiments also could be done testing various consequences of drinking and driving as they pertain to underage college students' fears and concerns. For example, having to tell one's parents about a DUI charge, having to spend a night in jail, suffering from increased insurance rates, not being able to go to law school, and having to put an arrest for DUI on future job applications are consequences that can be tested.

Appendix: Sample Ads Shown to Participants



DRUNK DRIVING DOESN'T JUST KILL DRUNK DRIVERS.

Hannah and Sarah Fogleman, killed Dec. 22, 1988 at 12:22am on I-95 South, Brunswick, GA.

Next time your friend insists on driving drunk, do whatever it takes to stop him. Because if he kills innocent people, how will you live with yourself?

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS DRIVE DRUNK.

U.S. Department of Transportation

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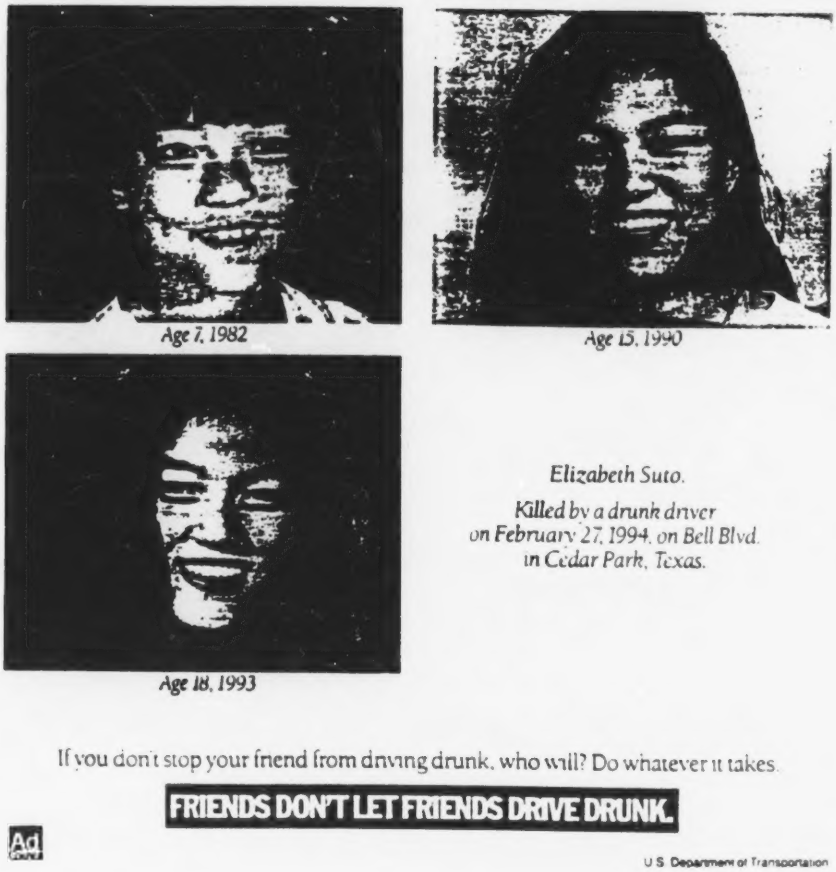


Age 7, 1982

Age 15, 1990

Age 18, 1993

Elizabeth Suto.

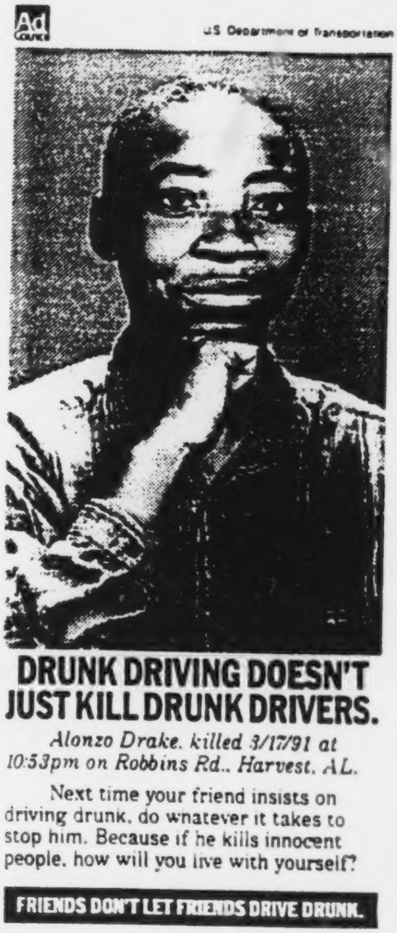
Killed by a drunk driver on February 27, 1994, on Bell Blvd. in Cedar Park, Texas.

If you don't stop your friend from driving drunk, who will? Do whatever it takes.

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS DRIVE DRUNK.

U.S. Department of Transportation

NOTE TO PUB: DO NOT PRINT INFO BELOW. FOR ID ONLY
Drunk Driving - Magazine 1/3 pg. sq. (4-5/8x4-7/8") B/W
DD-M-08405-G: "Elizabeth Suto" 110 line screen
(Film at: Quality House of Graphics - 718-784-7400)



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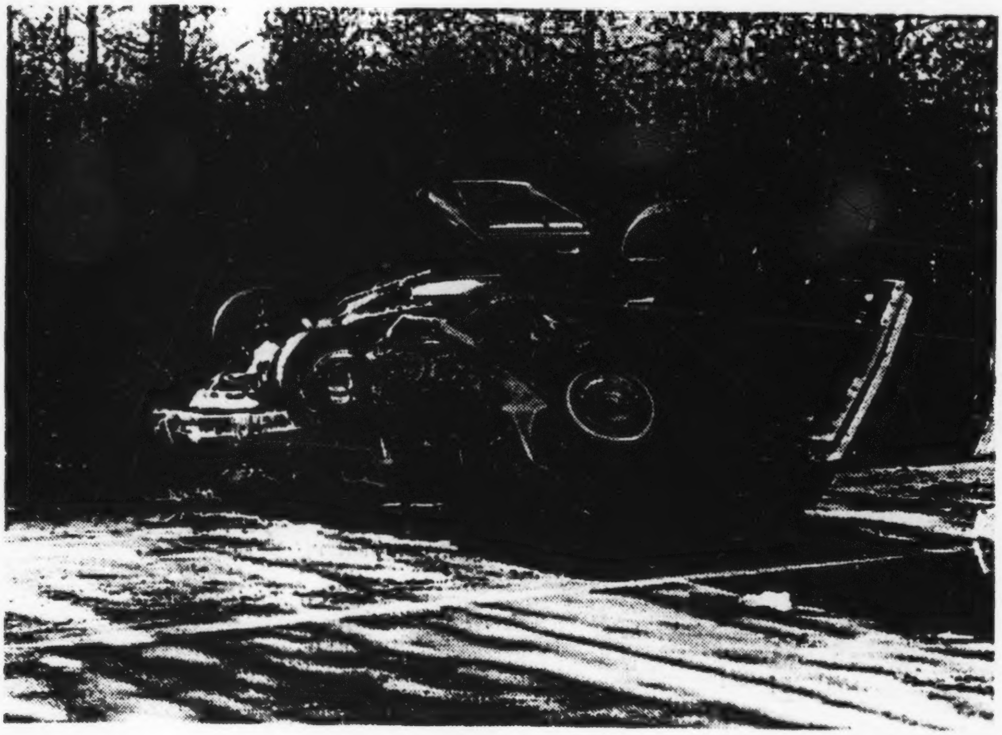
DRUNK DRIVING DOESN'T JUST KILL DRUNK DRIVERS.

Alonzo Drake, killed 3/17/91 at 10:53pm on Robbins Rd., Harvest, AL.

Next time your friend insists on driving drunk, do whatever it takes to stop him. Because if he kills innocent people, how will you live with yourself?

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS DRIVE DRUNK.



Ever Get Somebody Totally Wasted?

TAKE THE KEYS.
CALL A CAB.
TAKE A STAND.

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS DRIVE DRUNK

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A New Media Analysis Technique: An Ethical Analysis of Media Entertainment

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Abstract

This paper asserts the need for an ethical analysis of media entertainment texts and describes how it may be carried out. Just as other forms of media criticism are grounded in the disciplines of linguistics, psychology, and sociology, this media analysis technique is based on ethical principles and the evaluation of values communicated by media entertainment. The paper elaborates on the significance of ethical analysis, as well as practical guidelines for implementation.

A New Media Analysis Technique: An Ethical Analysis of Media Entertainment

Many forms of media criticism have been developed as tools for interpretation of media texts, each one providing a unique perspective into the meaning of media texts and the implications of their meaning. For instance, semiological analysis looks at how meaning is created. Psychoanalytic criticism tries to understand the unconscious desires and politics working within a media text. Marxist criticism views the media as a highly political entity exemplifying the conflict between the bourgeois and the working class. Sociological analysis examines the relationships within the text, as well as the impact of the text on relationships between media and the audience. Berger's Media Analysis Techniques sets forth all of these forms of analysis as an accepted "canon" of critical methods (1991). Each contributes a different way of looking at media content and the implications of living in a mass mediated society. Each pays attention to a different set of details and works from its own set of assumptions. One does not necessarily have more value than another, but each contributes a set of tools with which to examine media texts and further our knowledge and understanding of messages and practices within the media industry.

I would like to propose another lens with which to look at media texts: an ethical lens. Discussion of media ethics often is reserved for the practice of journalism, public relations, and advertising. We tend to view media ethics as a moral code that provides a list of do's and don'ts that explain what is acceptable and punishable in the practice of these media professions. But ethics permeate all stages and forms of mass media, from creation to audience reception. Ethics is latent in our decision-making, in the stories found in media texts, and in how the audience chooses to use media texts. From start to finish, ethical choices are inherently present in media production, dissemination, and consumption.

Ethical discussions outside of journalism, public relations, and advertising, have generally focused on issues of race, gender, and ethnicity. The importance of these issues is reflected in the substantial body of literature addressing media representation of minority groups and the continued growth in the fields of ethnic studies, women's studies, African American studies, Asian American studies, and the like. Many of these disciplines examine media -- from news to prime time television, and the art film to blockbuster movies -- as a source that reflects and reifies cultural values and perceptions. Such studies exemplify the need for ethical analysis of media entertainment as well as the significant implications of media representations.

It is my purpose to apply some of the same assumptions behind ethical analysis of minority groups in the media to other ethical standards displayed in media practices and content. In addition to evaluating the degree of fairness or bias in the media toward minorities, the media communicates cultural values about the nature of relationships, business practices, the value of an individual, and acceptable means to an end, to name a few examples. A critique of ethical practices and portrayals in entertainment media is a means of examining our own cultural values and ethical standards, and with this in mind I would like to suggest a systematic way of examining media texts in terms of ethical values. Whether one believes that media influences our cultural values and beliefs, or merely reflects them, an ethical analysis of media entertainment can reveal much about our culture's ethical standards. Just as analysis of gender, racial, or ethnic bias can uncover the deep-seated attitudes and beliefs about gender roles, racial, and ethnic groups, critiquing media in terms of other ethical values can lead to a discovery or articulation of American ethical standards.

In developing an ethical analysis of media entertainment, an understanding of the basic assumptions behind its practice must be examined. Like other media analysis techniques, this critical method also must draw upon a group of key terms and ideas. In addition, due to the immense size of the entertainment industry, it is important to clearly define the sites of criticism. As previously mentioned, ethical decisions are made in production, dissemination, and consumption, as well as the text itself. An ethical analysis is most easily applied to media content, but it may be useful to examine industry practices and dominant practices of media audiences, as well. Finally, it is necessary to think through the process of ethical analysis and criticism of media entertainment to provide a model of how this criticism technique may be carried out.

Defining an ethical analysis of media texts: assumptions and key terms

In establishing the assumptions of an ethical critique of media entertainment, it is necessary to provide a definition of ethics. Ethics is one of those elusive terms like culture, truth, and ideology. It can take on a variety of meanings, depending on the context of time, place, cultural norms, personal values and beliefs, and the situation at hand. For the purposes of defining a media analysis technique based in ethics, ethics may be defined as a systematic study of moral choices. Discussions of ethics naturally implicate moral philosophy and the role of the moral imagination (Holmes v, Rossi 4) "The 'moral imagination' serves as a useful shorthand for that process of posing and mulling over issues of demanding action and judgments of right and wrong. The moral imagination also refers to the ideas and possibilities that occur to us in judging courses of action" (Rossi 4). The moral imagination makes ethical decision-making possible, referring to the process of looking at options and weighing the results. I choose to focus my definition of ethics on *moral choices* because ethical analysis is designed to critique the results of choices already made and executed.

But this definition of ethics as the study of moral choices still leaves the ambiguity of "moral choices." *Moral* describes a type of choice that is made. You can choose between a hamburger and a cheeseburger with no consequence, except for your own desire or taste. Normally, this choice is not based on anything but personal preference. But a *moral* choice involves consequences that reflect on the choice, critiquing it as right, wrong, good, or bad. Sometimes the significance of a moral choice is attached to an ethically-neutral decision: a McDonald's placemat will tell you, you made the *right* choice. But whether you choose a hamburger or cheeseburger, or even the choice between McDonald's and Wendy's, is really inconsequential. There is no right or wrong; it is a matter of personal taste.

However, *moral choices* are guided by the moral imagination and careful consideration of results measured against social and cultural norms. We make decisions in accordance to our beliefs about what is true, fair, responsible, or right. The process of moral decision-making is usually second-nature to us. We simply speak and behave based on the values established by our culture and our own personal beliefs (Bugeja

9-17). Although buying a hamburger instead of a cheeseburger is not a moral choice, the decision of how to spend your money or what constitutes a healthy diet may reveal your values, and thus may be considered a moral choice. I stress that these *may* be considered moral choices because some would view them as practical, physiological and material choices with no moral consequence. My point, however, is that there are values involved in such choices, and consideration of values (or the way in which a decision reflects a system of values) indicates a moral choice (Bugeja 3-4).

Values are another key concept in the basic assumptions of an ethical media analysis. In essence, an ethical critique is designed to ask, what values are operating in this text? What are the choices, and what are the values behind those choices? Fairclough suggests that the first step in evaluating any media text is to evaluate the choices by asking, "How is the text designed, why is it designed in this way, and how else could it have been designed?" Fairclough explains, "This question highlights the idea that texts are based upon choices, and that alternative choices might always have been made" (202). What makes one choice more desirable than another depends on one's values. An ethical critique of media texts works with the assumption that media texts are produced by a series of choices, and that choices are made based on values. Because the implementation of values indicates a moral decision, the choices made in production, dissemination, and consumption of media texts may be said to have ethical significance. An ethical critique of media assumes that ethical choices are inherent in all media forms.

Another assumption operating in an ethical critique is that ethical concerns are worthy of close study because the values inherently present in media texts both reflect and reinforce cultural values. The extent of media influence depends on an interpretation of media effects. In discussion of this new critical model, I will approach media effects from three perspectives: (1) Gerbner's cultivation analysis, (2) the social construction of reality, and (3) media's reproduction of dominant ideology and power relations. Each of these theories are open to a range of interpretation from a powerful media perspective to a view of limited effects. I suggest these theories not as means to determine the scope of media effects, but to propose the need to take the production process of media entertainment seriously and pay attention to ethical choices and value messages in media entertainment texts.

Cultivation analysis

Gerbner's cultivation analysis is part of the 20-year Cultural Indicators research project designed to "understand the consequences of living in a mass-produced symbolic and cultural environment dominated by television" (Signorielli 9). Gerbner is the director of massive empirical studies collecting quantifiable data to understand the extent of mass media's influence on audiences. One of his major research questions is to discover how media messages contribute to an understanding of social reality. The process of documenting and analyzing the independent contributions of television messages to the viewers' conception of reality is referred to as cultivation analysis.

> Cultivation analysis generally begins with identifying and assessing the most recurrent and stable patterns in television content, emphasizing the consistent images, portrayals, and values that cut across most program genres. In its simplest form, cultivation analysis tries to ascertain if those who spend more time watching television are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common and repetitive messages and lessons of the television world, compared with people who watch less television but are otherwise comparable in important demographic characteristics (Signorielli 16).

This research aims to quantifiably measure media impact by comparing the beliefs of those classified as "heavy viewers" and "light viewers," based on the pattern of attitudes and beliefs presented in analyzed television content. Of course, many variables besides television influence an individual's attitudes and beliefs. Education, class, gender, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and age all interfere with making direct correlations between television content and views of the world.

> Cultivation is not the sole (or even frequent) determinant of specific actions, although it may tip a delicate balance, mark the mainstream of common consciousness, and signal a sea of change in the cultural environment. Strictly speaking, cultivation means the specific independent (though not isolated) contribution that a particularly consistent and compelling symbolic stream makes to the complex process of socialization and encultration (Gerbner 249).

Gerbner's approach is to look at underlying attitudes and opinions rather than surveying specific types of

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knowledge and behavior. He goes beyond the hypodermic needle theory to look at the larger picture of what makes a culture distinct and how media texts on television contribute to forming those distinctions. The trends found in media messages are considered significant due to the mass dissemination of media messages.

It is for these same reasons that an analysis of media entertainment from an ethical framework is needed. Society's values and ethical (or unethical) behavior cannot be solely attributed to the media at large, nor to any specific media texts. However, the values communicated in media texts contribute to the cultural environment as part of "the complex process of socialization and enculturation." Gerbner's cultivation analysis points to the potential influence of repeated exposure to media messages and the theory that attitudes and opinions can be shaped over time by the dominant themes found in media texts. Looking at ethics and values in media texts simply points to a more specific area and type of content relayed in the media. As Gerbner's work clarifies, the patterns of values exhibited in media entertainment can be cultivated over time into accepted cultural norms. Therefore, an ethical critique can contribute to an understanding of media entertainment's relationship to our culture's ethical norms and values.

Social construction of reality

Gerbner's research hypotheses hint at the broader theory of social construction of reality. Both cultivation analysis and social construction of reality are concerned with the relationship of media and culture. And both support an active audience theory that acknowledges the audience is attentive and synthesizes mediated symbols with its own experience (Baran 291).

A media application of social construction of reality is based on the social science epistomolgical model that says reality is created by what we experience. Because mediated communication is part of what we experience, and also brings experiences outside the realm of our knowledge to us, media plays a role in our understanding of the world. Christians says, "From these media we receive symbols of who we are, what we should believe, and how we should act. [Media] entertainment, for all its recreative value, does much to educate and socialize its patrons, who are all of us" (215-216). Media texts present a range of experiences as part of, or as an imitation of, reality. By virtue of the media being part of our lives, it begins contributing to our understanding of reality, similar to the way another relationship or experience might contribute to it.

In my interpretation, this theory views media as a contributor to culture, but resists a powerful effects view that attributes all cultural understanding to media manipulation. Adoni and Mane take a less favorable view of media and the social construction of reality. They assert the need for a more holistic view of media effects and culture, and cite Adorno and Horkheimer's "culture industry" as an early attempt at a more integrated approach (Adoni 323, 332). Adorno and Horkheimer first introduced the "culture industry" concept in the mid-1940s, a time when the powerful effects conception of media was in its prime. They state:

> The whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry. The old experience of the movie-goer, who sees the world outside as an extension of the film he has just left (because the latter is intent upon reproducing the world of everyday perceptions), is now the producer's guideline. The more intensely and flawlessly his techniques duplicate empirical objects, the easier it is today for the illusion to prevail that the outside world is the straightforward continuation of that presented on the screen. . . . Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies (During 33-34).

Their essay represents an early, powerful effects view that still leaves some kind of cultural residue, a question in our minds, as to the power of media to consume our experience of reality. Adoni and Mane note that from this point of view, "The main function of these symbolic expressions of reality is to manipulate the individual into developing a 'false' consciousness of both the immediate social environment and of more remote and/or abstract social phenomena" (Adoni 332). This rather threatening view of the social construction of reality is presently looked on with skepticism (Baran 291), but the extreme view represents the worst-case scenario that keeps critics coming back to examine media content and the social construction of reality.

Whether media's social construction of reality is viewed as one of many cultural contributors or as an all-powerful source, this theory serves to support the need for an ethical critique of media. If we naturally integrate the values represented in media texts with our own, it is worthwhile to identify the values

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communicated in mass media. If the ethical decision-making portrayed in media entertainment contributes to the audience's experience of reality, we ought to look at how ethical dilemmas are presented and solved in media entertainment.

Ideology and power

A final theory that supports the need for critical ethical evaluation of media texts is the notion of power and ideology. These concepts have emerged as an important part of contemporary social and cultural theory (Lull 3). Applied to the media, ideology and power are key issues due to the mass distribution of media texts, as well as the normalization of power relations and ways of thinking presented in media texts. Lull says, "Some ideological sets are elevated and amplified by the mass media, given great legitimacy by them and distributed persuasively, often glamorously, to large audiences. In the process, selected constellations of ideas assume ever-increasing importance, reinforcing their original meanings and extending their social impact" (8). In the routine storytelling and images of mass media, dominant ideologies are reproduced and alternative voices and ways of thinking are shut out of the marketplace of ideas. "Because authorship of television's agenda rests ultimately in the hands of society's political-economic-cultural establishment, the selected information often congeals to form ideological sets that over-represent the interest of the powerful and under-represent the interests of others" (Lull 9).

The power of the privileged is sustained and increased primarily because their ideological dominance is executed in the most mundane, everyday images and messages we encounter. For this reason, scholars concerned with race, gender, and ethnicity carefully critique media messages. The same principle may be extended to other media practices and portrayals of cultural values, as well. I propose a systematic method of analysis because the dominant ways of thinking are so normalized that we do not even recognize their presence. Lull states, "Because media content is not sponsored directly by government or associated in the minds of most people with administrative authority, its ideological tones and trajectories are not easily recognized, a fact that helps magnify the ideological impact" (15). Furthermore, Lull notes that "when people refer to media images in everyday conversations, privileged ideological themes are once again articulated and socially validated" (20). In other words, the media is a powerful source of reproducing the ideas of America's elite and silencing those who have never had the chance to speak.

Although discussion of ideology and power tends to be very abstract, Lull addresses the implications of media-transmitted ideology: "Ultimately, cultural power reflects how, in the situation realms of everyday life, individuals and groups construct and declare their cultural identities and activities and how those expressions and behaviors influence others" (72). The ideology reinforced by media texts reinforces our own behavior and relationships to continue supporting the established power-structure. Lull suggests that as long as the media condone the dominant ideology, social change will be stifled -- as represented in the media and in real life.

> The ability of media to spotlight and disseminate ideological and cultural fragments first of all answers the often asked question, "do the mass media reflect social reality or create it?" Without a doubt, the answer is "both." More interesting questions are, "How does the media reflect and create social reality who benefits, and in what ways?" Or perhaps even more to the point, "How do the media help facilitate the social construction of cultural reality?" (73).

Lull extends the social construction of reality theory into a realm where it is most powerful: when it is invisible. But his suggestion to begin asking "how" media reflects and creates society is the point where I see an ethical critique enter into the dialogue. What values have been normalized so that ideology can be reproduced without being noticed? How do we view the powerful members of society versus the less-powerful? What values are attached to both, and how do we explain the difference between the two? An ethical analysis of media entertainment is needed because media producers and audience members take these "hidden" values for granted. Critics need to look closely at the content of media entertainment to identify the ethical dilemmas and implications of reproduced power and ideology.

Each of these theories supplies reasons for critiquing the creation and content of media from a set of ethical questions and standards. The common bond between all three is the power of mass-distributed texts.

Regardless of whether one agrees with the powerful effects of Adorno and Horkheimer or an active audience conception of media effects, media entertainment produces an idea of what constitutes acceptable values. With regard to ideology and power, the media has been so successful in cultivating attitudes and constructing a social reality that we don't even recognize ethics and values within texts because we simply expect a certain set of ideas to exist in the story. The strong presence of media in our culture and society make its content an important source of study. Moreover, because media production, dissemination, and consumption hinge on moral choices (choices determined by values), we ought to critically look at the values and ethics portrayed in media texts.

In addition to assumptions, media analysis techniques are distinguished by a set of ideas, reflected in the vocabulary used in analysis. For an ethical analysis, the terms used to describe ethical principles should be used in the critique. This includes the concepts of truth and fairness, recognition of bias and manipulation, and attention to responsibility and power (Bugeja). Josephson has established a set of ten universal values: honesty, integrity, promise-keeping, fidelity, fairness, care, respect, responsibility, pursuit of personal excellence in character, and accountability. Just as semiotics, psychoanalytic analysis, Marxist analysis and social analysis draw on the vocabularies of linguistics, Freudian psychology, Marxism, and the social sciences, the dialogue of ethical criticism ought to use the vocabulary of ethical study.

Defining an ethical analysis of media texts: process and application

With the assumptions that all media texts inherently contain results of ethical choices and that the evaluation of those choices are significant, along with a set of terms to use in analysis, I can now present a proposed method of an ethical critique of media entertainment. Like other methods of media analysis, an ethical critique is one method of entering into and evaluating a text. It is not meant to produce a comprehensive look at a single text or a series of texts. Instead, it is designed to look carefully at the values communicated through the choices made in production, dissemination, consumption, and content.

Before elaborating on these four sites of ethical analysis and detailing a possible method of ethical analysis, it is necessary to note the critic's position in relation to the text. The media critic is a member of the audience and can only infer the reasoning behind choices to evaluate the effectiveness or implications of those choices. It is not the critic's role to find a definitive answer regarding the producer's intentions or the impact on the audience; it is the critic's role to provide a reading, or interpretation, based on media content. The critic is not in a position to know the details of production and dissemination, but to offer suggestions as to what the final product means in and of itself, in relation to culture and society, and to the ongoing stories and values constructed by media entertainment.

Even so, the critic is in a privileged position due to his or her media literacy and training to watch, observe, and interpret media texts. Although he or she is an audience member, the critic watches media texts differently than the average television or movie viewer. For this reason, it is important that the critic take into consideration the media text's intended audience and purpose. For example, to a critic, the movie Pulp Fiction may be a site for social commentary. But to an average audience member, who may have selected to see this movie because John Travolta stars in it or Quentin Tarantino directs it, the movie is viewed as an exciting mobster film with eccentric and entertaining characters. Huckin points out that discourse analysts, who face the same disconnection from the average audience member as media critics, ought to consider the text from both the view of the intended audience and from a more distant, critical vantage point as a critic (98). He suggests that the analyst first experience the text as it is created to be experienced, and then return to it again with a more critical eye. This dual-approach to a media text raises an awareness of the gap between a critical reading and average audience viewing. Both perspectives are relevant to the analytic process of the text itself, as well as evaluations of production, distribution, and consumption. In the case of analyzing the latter three, the dual role of the critic is to first consider the point of view of the decision-maker, and then evaluate the choice from the critic's 'outsider' viewpoint.

As has been mentioned throughout the paper, ethical criticism can focus on any or all of the four sites of ethical analysis. An ethical analysis would best focus on one aspect of an ethical site in order to conduct a detailed study, but these locations of ethical decision-making often are interrelated and it would be possible to consider two or more of them for a comprehensive study of a single text.

Production refers to the decisions made in the creative process of making a media text. It looks at choices made in directing, writing, acting, lighting, costuming -- all the factors of production that contribute to our understanding of the verbal and visual communication. The source of study will be the media text and the context in which it is presented, although the focus is not on the textual content. Instead, the focus is on the textual choices, which requires use of the moral imagination. Not only does the ethical critic need to look at what is presented in and around the text, but he or she must imagine the options that have been rejected. For instance, in an ethical critique of a Hitchcock film, one may question his use of framing and music. Why did he choose this camera angle? What does the underlying music contribute to the scene? Why does the cut to a close-up occur now and not earlier or later? These kinds of questions are not moral issues standing alone, but the further evaluation of the answers leads the critic down the path of ethical evaluation. How does Hitchcock's choice to pan the landscape contribute to the story? What does it invite the viewer to think about? What did Hitchcock want us to think about? Why? Some sort of ethical value lies behind each choice, as defined in the assumptions of ethical critique. We draw on our beliefs of right and wrong, good and bad, even in the process of making practical choices. The moral values in the production of media texts is found in the answer to the questions, What are the creators trying to communicate here? And why this message and not others?

Dissemination looks at the choices made by media outlets concerning how to present the text. This includes circulation, distribution, promotion, and framing of the media event. Ethical analysis of dissemination evaluates the process of deciding the target audience for a text and how to go about marketing the text to the intended audience. Sources of observable data include the text itself, the environment it occurs in, the promotional strategies including advertising, movie trailers, talk show appearances, and merchandizing, as well as distribution of facts such as time and location(s) of release, profitability, and viewership/attendance (such as Nielsen ratings). An example of an interesting source of ethical critique of media dissemination would be the NBC television show, Friends. The ethical analysis would focus on the values behind choices of the program's time slot, the advertisers supporting the program, Friends merchandise such as t-shirts, coffee-table books, and mugs. Other sources to consider in an evaluation of the message of Friends may be the milk ad campaign and movie projects the actors from Friends have appeared in. The theme song by the Rembrandts, and the popularity of Jennifer Aniston and Courtney Cox's hair styles also are sites of dissemination. Like the ethical critique of production, an analysis of dissemination probes the values being communicated by these combined texts, as well as the values behind the decision to create the images presented in a variety of media outlets. With the integrated marketing approach of media entertainment, critiquing the dissemination of a media text and the coherent presentation across media sources are important sites of study to evaluate ethical choices and values presented in the media.

Consumption is a less tangible site of evaluation, but an important site in the process of mass communication. Consumption refers to evaluating the thought-process behind the audience's choice to watch a movie or television program. Ethical choices are inherently present in the process of selecting what to watch, as well as deciding how to respond to media texts. The process of collecting and evaluating data for this kind of ethical critique is different than the other three sources of evaluation. While other sites of critique may be based on a media event, an ethical critique of media consumption is based on audience selection and retention of the event. Data may be collected through survey interviews or ethnographic study. For example, an interesting ethical analysis of audience consumption might be a study of the success of the Star Wars Trilogy re-release in movie theaters. By interviewing Star Wars fans, people waiting in long lines to get tickets, and gathering audience reaction to the dissemination of Star Wars, an ethical analysis may reveal something new about values in our culture. The critic would look for the dominant values among the audience members that motivate their choice to see this film classic again and again. Consumption is an important site of study because it can serve as a useful place to compare audience values with the values generated in the process of production and dissemination. Are the media industry's perceptions of audience values and motivation to watch media entertainment true based on an ethical analysis of media consumption? What role does media entertainment play in the audience's daily lives and discussions? What do audiences expect from media entertainment, and is the expectation fulfilled? An ethical analysis of consumption may reveal answers to some of these questions about media and society.

Finally, the *text itself* serves as a site for ethical analysis. This is probably the most viable site for ethical analysis. Putting aside production concerns, practices of dissemination, and audience appeal, the stories and characters in a media text itself models ethical dilemmas. This strategy is similar to a content analysis, but with an eye for identifying the ethical themes and issues in the text. Although media entertainment usually takes place in a fictional world, most stories are placed in a context that closely resembles reality. Media's role in social construction of reality is a key concept to the significance of textual analysis from an ethical point of view. All the hype surrounding the character Murphy Brown's choice to be a single parent illustrates the close connection between reality and fiction, and the impact of moral choices in fictional stories on the real world. When Vice President Dan Quayle condemned the character and the program, Murphy Brown, the television show became a site for serious ethical debate about "family values" and child rearing. The situational comedy, resembling real life, was treated as a real story with real consequences. Other television programs and movies are likely to have similar responses, but perhaps not as blatant as the Murphy Brown situation. This site for analysis is centered on an analysis of the story and the ethical values portrayed in media texts. Each of these sites of ethical analysis provides insight into the ethical values contained in the creation and content of media entertainment texts. As the dominant source of stories about our culture, an ethical analysis may help distinguish cultural values and the degree of reality presented in media entertainment.

The process for ethical analysis is adapted from a number of ethical decision-making models. Although the critic is not making an ethical decision, he or she is about the business of evaluating the decisions made in a media text and the values communicated by those choices. The considerations that go into the decision-making process are appropriate factors to consider in evaluation, as well. The four key steps in an ethical critique are to describe the ethical choice in question, to define the relevant concepts and concerns, to determine the implications and consequences of the choice, and to defend the critique with support from the media text and other sources.

1. Describe the ethical choice in question

Once the critic has experienced the text as a regular audience member and has followed that up with another viewing to look at the text more critically, ethical issues, themes, or particular instances of ethical choices ought to emerge from the text. Most likely, the critic will not be able to address every choice or value in the text, so he or she ought to select a few prominent themes that are of interest to him or her. It may be helpful to view the media text again with a few select issues and values to watch for.

The first step is to simply describe the choices and values seen in the text. This may include noting the content of specific scenes or characters and writing a detailed description of what happened. Depending on the site of ethical analysis being addressed, describing the text may focus on the story's framework and presentation to describing specific content that exemplifies moral choices. Also, descriptions may look at the text as a whole, or specific segments of it. For some, the process of describing may include a thorough content analysis, but for others description may be based on first-impressions and memory re-call. There is no prescriptive formula (just as this proposed method for ethical critique may be adjusted and changed to fit individual circumstances), but description allows the critic to categorize and analyze the details or larger impressions of a media text.

The categorization of ethical issues ought to be based on the events in or surrounding the media text. The critic may also choose to begin with a set of ethical values, such as Josephson's universal values, and look for instances in the production, dissemination, consumption, or content of the text that exemplify values such as honesty, fairness, respect, or responsibility. But this step of describing the text ought to be based on the textual evidence described in each of the four sites of analysis above.

Thorough description of the text must precede an evaluative judgement of the text. As a media analysis technique that attempts to explain values such as fairness and truthfulness in the media, the process of describing the ethical issues at hand help the critic achieve fairness and truthfulness by accounting for details with a non-evaluative perspective. This step is designed to notice all details in the text that contribute to the values communicated. By setting aside judgements of the decisions made in or about a text, the critic is better able to fully describe what is going on in the text. This may lead to noticing details that evaluative bias may have caused the critic to neglect.

In the process of defining, one should not only look at what is included in the text, but what has been excluded. Notice what happens in the text, and what could have been done differently. What options appear to have been rejected? The critic ought to explore the details of choices and related values without making evaluative judgements at this stage. Furthermore, the description at this stage of analysis should be grounded in the text being considered; meaning, focusing on the text itself and the content that reflects choices made at the various stages of production, distribution, and consumption.

2. Define the relevant concepts and concerns

This step is borrowed from the Potter's Box model of ethical decision making (Christians 2-25). The Potter's Box model suggests to first define the situation, followed by identifying values, selecting guiding principles, and considering loyalties. I have grouped these four key components of the Potter's Box model into the second step of an ethical critique of media entertainment. Each of them introduce a dimension of ethical concerns that serve to bring the ethical choice in question into sharper focus. Because the decision is already made and the point is to evaluate, these steps serve to help the critic understand what the decision-maker needed to take into account.

Practically speaking, one way to go about defining the relevant concepts and concerns is to brainstorm. Developing a running list of any and all ethical concepts that come to mind often produces ideas that may have not been apparent at first. Once the critic feels he or she has exhausted the possible values, principles, and loyalties related to the text, he or she should then go back and look for patterns and themes that emerge in the lists. Another tactic would be to refer to the ethical concepts and vocabulary to systematically work through ethical principles such as Josephson's universal values. This step builds and elaborates on the descriptive process on the first step. It differs, however, in that rather than describing ethical issues from the text's point of view (description based in the media text), this description is based in the ideas and vocabulary of ethics. The critic has already described the situation in the media text, and now the description focuses on the situation as a moral issue.

The Potter's Box model is particularly helpful in defining ethical concerns and issues because it suggests looking at the situation from a series of viewpoints -- each category adds a new layer or new dimension to the previous one. Defining the situation has been accomplished by the process of describing in step one, but as the critic refines his or her focus, he or she can synthesize the observations from the previous step to write a clear, coherent definition of the situation to be evaluated. This sets up a clear purpose for further work. With a written definition of the ethical situation, there is no question about what theme the critic has selected to focus on.

Values and principles are closely related, but offer slightly different nuances in the process of defining the relevant concepts and concerns. Values refer to rather abstract concepts such as love, truth, honesty, and integrity. These are concepts that may apply to any situation -- Josephson's universal values are a good example. A critic may choose to define the situation in relation to honesty, integrity, promise-keeping, fidelity, fairness, care, respect, responsibility, pursuit of personal excellence in character, or accountability. Some of these values may be more conducive to a particular site of analysis than others. The values of integrity, personal excellence, responsibility, and accountability may be very helpful in defining the ethical issues in production decision-making. An analysis of dissemination may look at fairness, care, and respect. An ethical analysis of consumption might be described in terms of integrity, promise-keeping, personal excellence, and responsibility. Finally, an analysis focused on the text itself may draw on any of these principles depending on the text's content.

To further clarify the process of describing and then defining the ethical situation, consider the movie Pretty Woman as an example. In the first step of an analysis looking at the moral choices modeled in the text itself, the critic ought to describe the characters, their situations, and the context of their interaction. The description may also detail how the main characters meet, how their relationship develops, and key moments, scenes, or lines that contribute to an understanding of the story. Based on the description, a critic should go on to define ethical issues in the text. What values do each of the characters display? What values are communicated about fidelity? Responsibility? Respect? Accountability?

The next step in the Potter's Box model is to consider ethical principles related to the text. Principles attach meaning to values by assigning significance or consequences to them. Carrying out the Pretty Woman example above, a critic might consider the principles, "sex outside of marriage is wrong," or "prostitution is wrong." Other principles might include "love conquers all" or "what may appear at first to be a bad choice can have a happy ending." Cultural cliches are a good source for brainstorming principles related to ethical choices and situations. Ethical principles often are behind the widely held beliefs expressed in cliches. This aspect of defining the ethical situation builds on the relevant values by attaching significance to them as right, wrong, good, or bad.

Finally, defining loyalties is another important step that enables a better understanding of the ethical problem's context. Loyalties ask the critic to consider the variables the decision-maker had to deal with. This presents possible points of contention and pressure that may have swayed a decision, or it may reveal a value in terms of which loyalty won out. In Pretty Woman, some of the loyalties may include financial success and financial survival, sexual desire, friendship, safety, personal integrity, and high-class appearance or lifestyle.

Examining loyalties puts the ethical situation in perspective, considering all the possible options demanding the decision-maker's attention. This often brings the real conflict and heart of the matter into focus.

At the completion of this step, the critic should have a good idea of the tensions the decision-maker had to deal with and the scope of related issues that factored into the final decision. This step provides contextual understanding, as well as ethical understanding due to working with the concepts and concerns surrounding the issue being examined.

3. Determine the implications and consequences

Here is where the critic must consider the potential outcomes of the values communicated in media entertainment. The ethical issue has been described and defined in detail, and now the critic can do the interpretive and evaluative work. Again, I stress that this is interpretive work, in that the implications and consequences may not be provable facts, but there must be enough evidence in research to lead to a logical conclusion. It may be helpful to begin by making separate lists of "observable" implications and "probable" implications to distinguish the two. "Observable" implications are those that are documented in statistics or news accounts, while "probable" implications refer to situations that may possibly occur as a result of the values communicated but has only theoretical concepts supporting it. The details of looking at the implications and consequences depends on the site of evaluation, and specific examples and discussion of this process are described in the discussion above defining the sites of production, dissemination, consumption, and text.

4. Defend the resulting interpretation

Media criticism has no right or wrong answers, only claims well-supported by evidence or lacking substantial support. Once the critic has described, defined, and determined the consequences of a choice, it is time to formulate an evaluative assertion about the text and use the previous three steps to elaborate on how you arrived at that conclusion. At this point in the process, it is appropriate to bring in definitions of ethical standards and cultural values. They can serve as a measuring stick with which to compare the values, principles, and loyalties of the situation being critiqued. Furthermore, this is an important step in relating media's influence in relation to culture.

Several ethical models or standards are available to use in this step. Josephson's Golden Kantian Consequentialism is a good example. It combines three of the most prominent models of ethical decision-making: the Golden Rule, Kant's Categorical Imperatives, and Mill's Consequentialism. Based on what Josephson sees as the best ethical guidelines from each of these ethical models, he develops three key principles to guide all ethical decision-making:

> I. All decisions must take into account and reflect a concern for the interests and well being of others.
>
> II. Ethical values and principles always take precedence over nonethical ones.
>
> III. It is ethically proper to violate an ethical principle only when it is clearly necessary to advance another ethical principle which, according to the decision maker's conscience, will produce the greatest balance of good. (Josephson 17)

Golden Kantian Consequentialism may be particularly useful in an ethical analysis of production and dissemination of media entertainment. The entertainment industry is viewed as business-minded and having little concern with the "well being of others." An analysis of a media text with regards to production and dissemination might look for evidence that the producers did, in fact, try to be fair and honest in their depiction of ethnic and racial minorities, for example. The second principle also raises the issue of business concerns versus integrity in entertainment. A critic might question if a particular media text appears to reflect greater value on the bottom line, or a greater concern with ethical values. Again, analysis of production and dissemination does not provide definitive, factual answers, but it looks at the media text as a source of understanding the values behind production and dissemination choices.

Finally, the third principle suggests that when two ethical principles come into conflict, the decision-maker ought to make a choice based on what will achieve the greater good. In the process of production, a film director or editor may need to make a choice between showing a brutal, violent scene or fading to black to show the passage of time after implying the ensuing action. Showing the scene may be defended by a value of truth and honesty, yet a director or editor may also feel a sense of responsibility, integrity, or accountability. With two ethical values up against each other, the decision must be made based on what is best for the story being told, the expectations of the audience and genre, as well as other loyalties of the decision-maker.

Statements of ethical principles, such as Golden Kantian Consequentialism, provide a point of comparison between the media text and other sources of ethical beliefs. The principles of Golden Kantian Consequentialism serve as guidelines that can support judgements and interpretations of media texts. In addition to statements of guiding principles like the Golden Kantian Consequentialism, professional standards and codes of ethics may be of use in some situations.

The process of describing, defining, determining, and defending is merely a guideline in conducting an ethical critique of media entertainment texts. Some situations may not require such detail, but it is necessary to describe before evaluating and to define the ethical issues before interpreting them. These analytical strategies prevent bias and to implement fairness.

As previously discussed there is no "right" or "wrong" interpretation of media texts. The quality of analysis is based on evidence from the text and implementation of the key concepts and assumptions of the analysis technique. A semiotic, psychoanalytic, Marxist, or social analysis of a given text may elicit a variety of responses. Every critic sees things in a different way, yet the criticism must be based on some common ground. Likewise, this paper has been an attempt at defining some of that common ground for a new analysis technique, an ethical analysis.

The unique contribution of an ethical critique is its attention to uncovering the values inherent in media production, dissemination, consumption, and texts. It is based on the assumptions that media texts represent a series of choices influenced by ethical values and frameworks, and that attention to these values is a significant factor in understanding our culture and society, as well as understanding the role of media in the formation and reproduction of cultural values. As with a semiotic, psychoanalytic, Marxist, and social analysis of media entertainment, an ethical critique draws upon a set of terms and ideas that were originally developed for another academic discipline, but are applicable in discussion of media texts. An ethical critique ought to begin by describing the choices and values observed in media texts, followed by defining relevant concepts and ideas, determining implications and consequences, and defending an ethical interpretation of the text. An ethical analysis of media entertainment offers way of gaining insight into the ethical values of our culture and media's role in creating and recreating cultural values. An ethical analysis may also be a useful lens to further our understanding of Gerbner's cultivation analysis, social construction of reality, and issues of ideology and power in media texts.

POSTSCRIPT

An extended example of an ethical analysis of a media text will be available at the AEJMC Conference Poster Session in Chicago on August 1, 1997, from 1-2:30 p.m.

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